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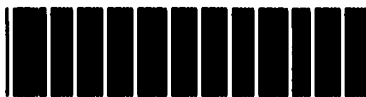
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VIOLETS AND JONQUILS.



IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

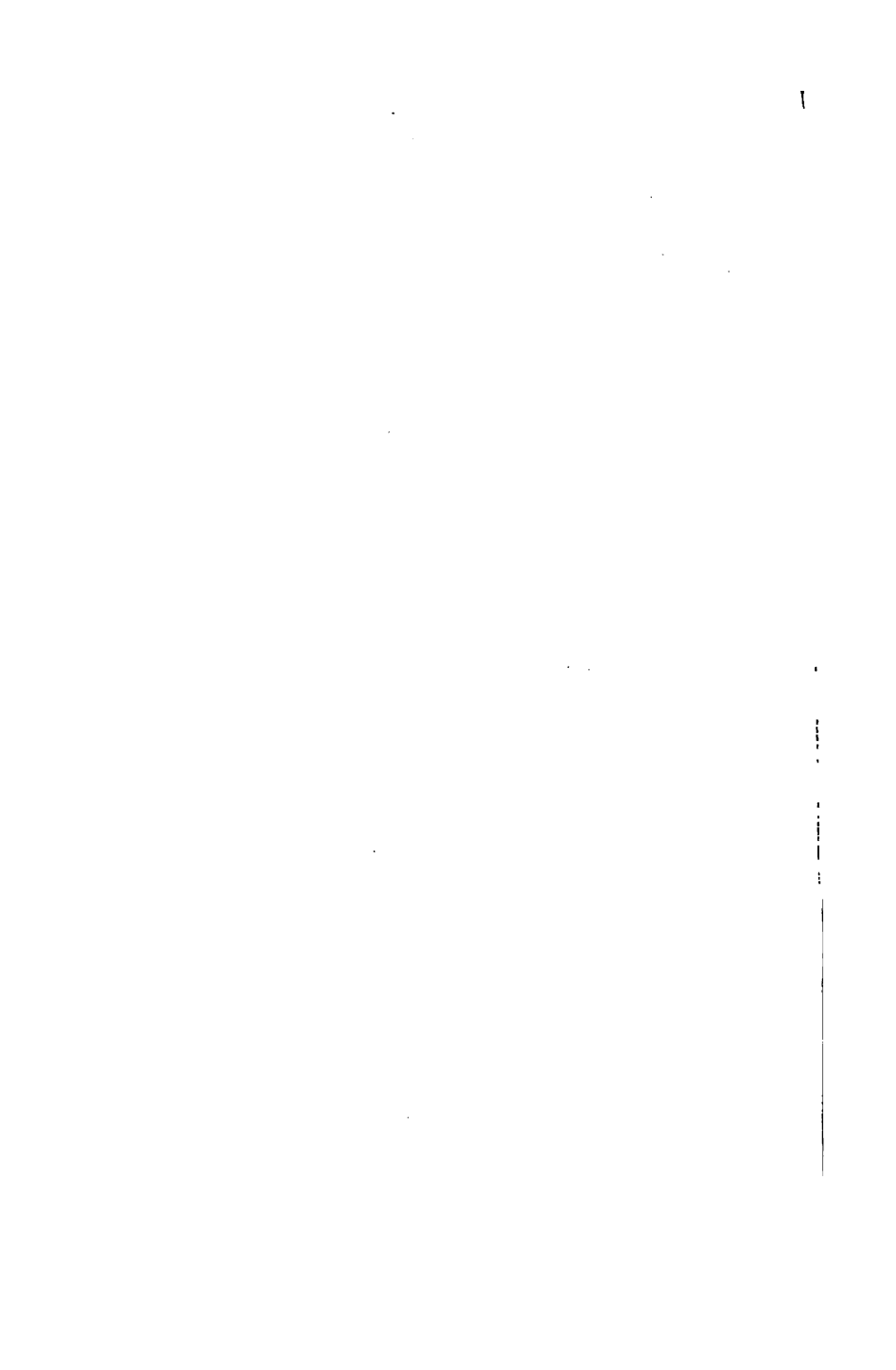


LONDON:

SAUNDERS AND OTLEY, CONDUIT STREET.

1857.

249. C. 342.



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OF THE

SECOND VOLUME.

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VIOLETS AND JONQUILS.

CHAPTER I.

THE WOLF IN SHEEP'S CLOTHING APPEARS AT THE MANOR.

THE winter passed away, and spring assumed her reign, without any very remarkable alterations taking place in the circumstances of the different personages to whom the reader has been introduced. Charles Burton had succeeded in winning away from Robson the first place in the examination for the Smith's prize, and was already a fellow of his college, and reading for the bar. The marriage case had not proceeded an inch farther, despite of interviews and letters between the parties concerned as principals and agents, diversified in every conceivable combination, that even a mathematical master setting problems in "variation" could have devised, all of which ended in smoke; and even the indefatigable Owen began to confess that there was very little hope of beating the enemy, except in the open field. Nor was his opinion of the probable result of a battle in the courts of law by any means favourable to the hopes of his client, since his decided impression was, that if Pauline adhered to her present statement, and deposed point-blank to her own

share in a plot to entrap Darcy into doing her tardy justice, the decision must be in her favour, and that she would do so, if called upon in her present frame of mind to give her evidence, there seemed but too little reason to doubt. So the best chance for Phil appeared to be in delay, an article in which Mr. Whiting dealt to any amount that was required; and drearily passed on week after week, spent in vain attempts to bribe, or coax, or threaten the opposing party into a surrender.

Mrs. Darcy's visit was still delayed, although the Hall was now in so forward a state of repair that it could have been rendered fit for occupation at a week's notice, and Phil himself lingered at the Priory, except an occasional journey to town upon Parliamentary business, during one of which he delivered his maiden speech with great *éclat*, and raised the hopes of his friends to the highest pitch. Yet back again he was continually coming to Midhampton, and lingering around the spot where his heart was imprisoned, petting up Leila, talking art and natural history to Menie, and every day falling more and more desperately in love with Florence Montgomery, under the sweet name of sympathetic friendship.

But the dangerous feelings with which she was sporting, but which at times became painfully manifest to her own heart, though she lacked resolution to tear herself away from their influence, or rather which with a false pride she sturdily denied in her evening reveries were as all-absorbing as they in reality had become, were beginning to do their work on the fair cheek and bright eyes of the poor girl; her laugh was becoming more forced every day, the tears started to her eyes at the least excitement, and the deep crimson streak on the clay-pale face told with terrible fidelity of the wretched, desolate spirit, which had

now superseded the joyous, careless merriment for which she had once been so famed.

At last came a crisis in the dull monotony of hope deferred, and although it arrived in the shape of a change for the worse, it seemed almost a relief, when compared with the long wearing suspense, engendered by Mr. Owen's unvarying reports: "Another interview with Madame Krummacher, or her husband, or Mr. Whiting" (as the case might be), "but no results."

One day Leila returned from the Manor, pale and trembling, with the distressing information that Florence had been suddenly taken very ill; indeed, that her mind was rather wandering, for it was by her confused manner, and incoherent, rambling train of conversation, that the child's fears had been first aroused, though before she left the house the attack had taken a sufficiently decided form to alarm Florence herself, who had retired to her room and sent for advice. Dr. Seaton had pronounced it a very serious nervous affection, and appeared more anxious than they had anticipated, as though he dreaded the worst consequences, and had ordered her to be kept very quiet, and to see no one but those who were actually in attendance on her. Menie, however, had been permitted, at her own urgent request, backed by that of the invalid, to enrol herself amongst the medical staff, while Leila had been rejected, not from any distrust of her good-will or attention to her new duties, for, to do her justice, her faults were not those of a cold or selfish heart, but owing to her impetuosity when in activity being only equalled by her laziness when in a state of repose.

The cause of this violent attack was unknown, although more than suspected of being connected in some manner with a visit she had that day received

from Mrs. Krummacher, who had stayed with her more than an hour, and had left the house with a smile of sleek complacency on her face, of a kindred description to that which foreigners usually assume when they are about to narrate anything which they consider galling to the pride of us unhappy islanders; or, to resort to another simile, with which school-boys listen, with a pretence of sorrow, to the awful intelligence that Pædagogus is confined to his bed, and is utterly incapable of performing his duties.

"I met the little chocolate-eating monster myself," said Leila, wrathfully, "and she looked as if she had been after some cowardly, sneaking cruelty or other. Why doesn't Phil marry her, as she is so bent upon having him, and go to see Marcellus Aurantius, taking his dearly beloved spouse with him?"

"Why so, Miss Mainwaring?" asked Captain Devereux, who happened to be calling at the Priory when Leila returned with her melancholy intelligence, "that would be a very novel way of mending matters, I rather suspect!"

"Perhaps it would be," replied the young lady, rather pertly, "but none the worse plan for that; 'the cure would be instantaneously effected, and without pain or inconvenience,' as Dr. Eisenberg announces of his system of eradicating callosities from the human feet, and the process is simply this: 'The mountains look o'er Pancsora, and Pancsora looks o'er the sea,' which is not, strictly and geographically speaking, correct, for you would require an uncommonly telescopic vision to behold Father Ocean from thence; but it looks o'er the Danube, which does just as well. And on the other side of 'Iser rolling rapidly,' dwell the turbaned and malignant Turks in very tolerable abundance, and as they are very fond

of white skins, pale eyes, fat bodies, and large feet, there is no doubt that our dear young bride would fetch a handsome price at Belgrade; and what could be easier than to sell her to some pasha or sandjiac, whatever they may be, and come back again with a piteous tale of the unsettled state of the country in those benighted regions, and a new fling at that ill-starred monarch, at whom everybody has a sly kick now-a-days, His Imperial and Apostolic Majesty, Francis Joseph of Austria. I am certain that it is some spiteful trick of hers," resumed Leila, sinking from her flight of absurdity into a mournful seriousness, with a celerity which would have appeared strange enough to a person unused to her vagaries. "I think it is a great pity that there is no law to punish people for making mischief in this way. Hans, with Phil's whip, John Sobieski, would have been worth his weight in gold this morning, if he would but have given madame precisely such a chase down the Manor avenue, as he gave her noble husband along our garden-walk a few weeks ago."

The supposition thus hazarded by Leila was perfectly correct, for Florence's nervous attack was certainly hastened, if not absolutely produced, by a conversation with Madame Krummacher, the excitement of which, acting upon a mind already harassed and weakened by the events of the last few months, had brought matters to a crisis, and added to a burthen long before disproportioned to the strength of the bearer, the last ounce which breaks the back at last. She had been hearing Menie read Italian, to which occupation she mostly devoted an hour or two every morning, and was just about to put on her bonnet to go out, when a visit was announced from Madame Krummacher, who sending in a most elaborate message of German compliments, requested most earnestly

to be allowed the inestimable honour of an interview with her.

Florence hesitated awhile, being unwilling to grant an audience to a person who, she felt convinced, had come upon some errand which would give her pain; but, upon more mature consideration, she thought that she might as well hear the worst, if there were anything to be told, so she nerved herself to the impending sorrow, and gave orders to Kathleen to admit the visitor.

Pauline, with true German taste, had dressed herself in accordance to the part she was going to play, and had expended much consideration upon the most appropriate costume for a meek, injured, loving wife, about to make her last appeal to the good feeling and honour of a rival, in whose justice and high principle alone she could hope to find sympathy under her present circumstances. She had a vague idea that heroines in distress were mostly rather ragged and dirty, and had very towzled hair; but this she had sense enough to think would not be a very engaging attire in the opinion of an English lady, besides running a great risk of being attributed to slatternly habits or extreme poverty, so she dropped that conception, and betook herself to another, which answered incomparably better. She arrayed herself, therefore, in a black silk dress, without which no German lady can exist, put on one of those funny, turn-down collars, usually appropriated to boys with round jackets and sailors' knots in their neck-kerchiefs, chastely accompanied by wristbands of the same masculine pattern (cuffs, I believe, is the feminine noun), hung a crucifix and beads round her neck for effect, although she was no more a member of the Romish communion than Mr. Dwight himself, trimmed a pocket-handkerchief with imitation lace, taken off—

I hardly know where, but I am perfectly certain it had seen plenty of service before—and finishing off with a pair of lemon-coloured gloves (Oh, lame and impotent conclusion to so promising a commencement !), sallied forth to try her hand as an actress, in a series of theatrical entertainments, beginning with the “Mourning Bride,” and ending with “All’s Well that Ends Well.”

She was received with her usual quiet courtesy and good breeding by Florence, who, apologizing for not being very well, sank back upon her chair, and shading her face from the fire, and also from the scrutinizing glances of her visitor, with a large feather hand-screen, requested to know the reasons which had procured her the favour of a visit from Madame Krummacher, between whom and herself all relations of mistress and pupil had now ceased for some weeks.

Pauline forthwith commenced clearing her decks for action, that is to say, she got out her handkerchief and laid it in her lap, to be ready to burst into tears in a seemly manner, without having to fumble about in an undignified manner for the means of arresting the torrent of her woes from spoiling her silk dress, took off her gloves in order to prevent splitting them in wringing her hands, and displaying a huge circular mass of gilt substance, which despite of doing duty as a wedding-ring, cast its effulgence from the middle finger of her right hand, turned up her eyes to the ceiling, which being the heaven of the theatres she considered the most appropriate place for adjuration, and plunged into her opening address with a melodramatic propriety of tone and gesture beyond all praise.

“I am the most wretched woman living ! wretched because I have a terrible duty, which it lacerates my poor heart to perform ! wretched, because I am alone

in the world, and there is no one to cheer or support me in my trial" (here followed a semi-circular wring of the hands, as if her knuckles were incorrigibly dirty) ! "wretched, because I am compelled to give pain to one who has been as kind to me as you have ! wretched, to think that I must needs bring sorrow on the heart of him whom I would willingly lay down my life to save from degradation or unhappiness !"

The feather-screen fell back, and the large, melancholy eyes of poor Florence, nerved to play her part bravely and unflinchingly by the maiden modesty within her, shone coldly and haughtily on her companion, as she replied—

"If you have come to ask my advice, Madame Krummacher, or to request my assistance in any undertaking, as you have frequently done before, I am perfectly at your service. But if you have come to make any impertinent and offensive remarks, in coupling my name with yours, in the affair to which you so unmistakeably allude, I must beg you to desist, and to take your leave, for no communications upon such a subject can ever exist between you and me."

Pauline was rather taken aback, but knowing that servility, like abuse, is sure to partially stick if you throw it on sufficiently thick, and that it is almost impossible to arrest the conversation of a person who is determined not to take offence, but to cringe more and more in proportion to the urgency of the necessity, she exchanged her previous heroic tone for one of sentimental admiration, and putting on a sweet smile, by dint of elongating her mouth, as though about to have an operation performed upon her back teeth, remarked, in a voice of zephyr-like softness—

"Of course, honoured lady, I never suspected you of entertaining feelings warmer than those of friendly good-will towards my cruel but beloved husband. I

know your noble and pure spirit too well for that, and I am quite convinced that had such an idea ever entered your head before you heard my tale, you would have driven it forth with horror the instant that you discovered his real position."

Down went the screen again. "I do not believe a syllable of all that improbable story," said Florence, "so you are once more arguing on quite false grounds. Pray be so kind as to confine your communications entirely to your own concerns, and to statements in which I can have some little belief, if you desire me to listen. If you can once prove to me that you have been injured in any way, I pledge you my word as an English lady—a class whose principles, permit me to say, are far stronger than their sentimental fancies, whatever foreigners may imagine to the contrary—that I will do all that lies in my power to assist you and to see you righted. But mind this! the very first word that you speak upon so offensive a topic as any allusion to my supposed rivalry, ends our conference. If you choose to consult me on these terms, well and good—I will give you my best advice; if not, I have no alternative but to peremptorily decline any further conversation with you on the subject."

This was not a very encouraging address, it must be allowed, but Pauline saw her way with tolerable clearness, to make it answer her purpose, and with well acted humility and resignation, assured her much-honoured friend that nothing could have been more foreign to her intention than to make any presumptuous comparisons between herself and Miss Montgomery; in fact, that the knowledge that Mr. Darcy had not made any serious impression upon the heart of that lady alone encouraged her to proceed, which she could not have summoned up sufficient resolution to do, had it been otherwise.

"To tell you the honest truth," said she, "you are the last person in the world to whom I could have confided that part of my tale to which I am now about to allude, if it had unfortunately happened that you were willing to accept his addresses if he were free; for I fear that to make such a marriage legal, even in Scotland, it is necessary for both parties to intend the ceremony to be binding, and I confess that I do not think Mr. Darcy had the slightest idea of making it so at the time. But my honour was at stake! a drowning man catches at a straw, and I grasped eagerly at the hope held out to me of redeeming my character; and I hoped, moreover, that he would eventually be persuaded to render me open justice in his own country. And I now come to you to ask, what is no such very great sacrifice, since you expressly say that you care nothing about him, that you will so unmistakeably check his wild passion for you, as to do all that lies in your power to remove from his path every obstacle to his adopting the only honourable course now left him; for I entertain little doubt, that were all chance of winning you entirely destroyed, my claims would ere long be fully recognised, and my peace of mind restored."

"You have been, by your own showing, a very worthless and immodest girl," replied Florence, behind her screen, "and as to your mistaken impression, that the future contains, this side the grave, any means of restoring you to unblemished character, I protest against that with all my soul, as an error that has brought more misery upon the world than any other that has ever been promulgated. It would be as reasonable to say of yesterday, that it is not past beyond recall, and that you both can and will cancel its existence, as attempt to restore to you a fair fame, which, as a fact, a thing enrolled in the irrevocable

annals of what has been, is gone beyond all human control. Repentance, amendment, reparation also, to a vast amount, by a humble and toilsome life of well-doing, all this is within your reach, no doubt, and absolute forgiveness beyond the barriers of this world; but actual innocence, and the happy cheerfulness of a spirit at peace with itself, can never come again. Still, at the same time that I consider the only course open to you is one of self-humiliation and atonement, or rather extra exertion to do good, and a consciousness that painful and degrading duties are your merited portion in the great work of ameliorating society, and that it is your duty, more than that of the average run of women, to devote yourself to the useful labours of ministering to the necessities and alleviating the squalid misery and vice of the fallen, to whom you yourself have belonged as a sister, and are bound by a tie of kindred frailties, at the same time, I repeat, I do not think it just that you should be deserted in your terrible journey through life by him who embittered its commencement; and did I believe that you had been wronged by Mr. Darcy, I for one would cordially acquiesce in the propriety of excluding him from friendship or intimate acquaintance, unless he will take upon himself the duty of supporting your steps in your path of amendment. But I tell you, fairly and candidly, that I utterly discredit the whole of this story from beginning to end, and do, from the bottom of my heart, believe that Mr. Darcy has been most infamously maligned by a vile conspiracy, and that he behaved with a chivalrous honour but too rare, alas! in the young men of the day."

"Do you think, then, Miss Montgomery, that I am so hopelessly depraved as to accuse myself of such an offence, though I am innocent? can you believe

that any woman would wrongfully rob herself of what is dearer to her than life! Oh, powers of heaven, hear me!" exclaimed Pauline, apostrophising a most hideous dæmon, which was grinning at her from a bracket, on which the Anglo-Catholic Florence lavished great affection, as having been modelled from a gutter-spout on a Flemish cathedral, and which reminded one of anything but a heavenly body—"how gladly would I exchange youth, and health, and every blessing I possess, to recover the self-respect which I have lost! How can you entertain such a strange suspicion of me, my noble-hearted friend?" and she cast a most touching glance at Florence, which she knew was the right one, since she had so often seen it at the theatre, and had studied it with great care.

She then proceeded to pour into the sickening ears of our unfortunate heroine the tale of her pretended wrongs, to which the gentle lady she addressed listened with a kind of torpid horror and disgust, every instant starting up to announce that she positively could not bear to hear one word more, and then sinking back again in passive and speechless despair, as though the tale, which was wellnigh driving her mad, had some awful influence over her, which she could not resist, but must hear the worst, come what might.

As Pauline concluded her tale, she was beyond measure amazed at the firmness and calm demeanour of the lady, whose feelings she had hoped to wound so cruelly, and in whose distress to gratify her own revenge and mortified vanity; and little did she dream of how effectually her malice had done its work, and how crushed and bleeding was that trustful, affectionate heart, which nevertheless assumed such an heroic air of self-possession.

"I will think over all that you have told me,

Madame Krummacher," said Florence, as her companion rose to leave, "and will let you know to-morrow to what determination I have come. At any rate, you may rest assured that I will be no obstacle to Mr. Darcy in the path of duty: if he owes you any atonement, I will be no party to preventing the payment. And now, farewell! I hardly think that if I had been as foolish and wicked as you represent yourself to have been, that I should have coldly dilated upon it to another girl of my own age; but ideas vary, I presume, in different people, and perhaps in different nations. I have no more to say."


So Pauline departed, grinning, as Leila described, with ill-concealed delight and triumph at the success of her scheme for placing, as she imagined, an insuperable barrier between Phil and his lady-love, whether her own law-suit succeeded or not. Did she then feel no compunction at her cruelty? Not a jot! she hated the pure-hearted Florence with all the detestation of an inferior nature, bitterly jealous of a higher one; hated her as a mean spirit hates a benefactor from the mere sense of obligation; as Satan hates an angel of light. Her rival's notions of the inutility of a late repentance were as incomprehensible to her, as to deny that paying your bills is any palliation of the offence of having left an account for a day or two—though perfectly able and willing to discharge it the first time you pass the shop. She was equally at a loss to understand how a very romantic, pretty story, in her own opinion, had assumed in that of Florence the loathsome aspect of a horrible account of vice and infamy; the notion of a life of atonement was little more to her taste, especially as she was not guilty of the identical offence laid by herself to her own charge; and as for her present sin of falsehood and treachery, Pauline's education and domestic associations un-

happily were such, as to render it impossible that she should regard her deception in any other light than triumphant self-complacency at her own talents; and contempt, withering enough to blight a full-sized gooseberry-bush, of that credulous, stupid, squeamish Englishwoman. So leaning against a gate, like Ludlam's dog to bark, for she was rather consumptive and it was a very damp morning, the remembrance of her treachery was so joyous to her, that she burst into a hearty fit of laughter, until between her merriment and her cough

"the big round tears
Coursed one another down her innocent nose
In piteous chase."

And while she was thus engaged, Florence was upon her knees, praying for strength to bear her weight of woe, and to choose the right path in this difficult question; neither condemning the innocent, if so poor Philip might prove, nor shielding the guilty; much less casting, by her love and devotion, a sunshine of happiness over a heart whose condition a proper remorse and sorrow would better become, and teaching it to think there was peace where there was no peace. And if her misery was never to be removed from her, she meekly begged that those terrible days might be shortened; that her cup however bitter might soon be drained, and the glass shattered; and that her mother, whose sharpest pang in dying was to leave her child without her holy care in the world, might ere long once more embrace her daughter, toilworn and weary indeed, but bearing on her the tokens of honest labour, of the burthen and heat of the day. And rising from her agony of devotion she opened the door to Leila, with her old, bright, gentle smile upon her face, and strove to laugh at her wild sallies, and to listen to her childish confidences as usual; but the effort was too

great, and ere the sun went down she was stretched upon her bed of sickness, half delirious, half torpid, neither awake nor asleep, living nor dead, with Mrs. Burton seated mournfully by her side to minister to her feverish wants, and little Menie's large loving eyes fixed so sorrowingly, and with such deep interest, upon every uneasy movement of that kind friend, who had been to her a sister, an instructress, and an enthusiastic admirer of her early promise of brilliant talent, such as it is rarely our good-fortune to find united in one person.



CHAPTER II.

CUPID PRICKS UP HIS EARS AT THE CLANK OF A CAVALRY
SABRE.

THE London train rattled merrily into Potter's Lane Station on a fine but rather cold afternoon, and a servant, wearing Colonel Mainwaring's livery, who had been awaiting its arrival for a considerable time, hastened to the platform to receive "a foreign gentleman of great distinction on a visit to Mr. Darcy," as he had been pompously announcing to all the travellers assembled in the waiting-room for the last half-hour; and peered into the first-class carriages, as they came slowly up, in search of the illustrious stranger—about whose comfort and dignity he had been drilled so diligently by Miss Leila, that he knew every petty detail of his duties off by heart. He had made up his mind to encounter some sickly, effeminate creature, nourished upon bonbons and cool coffee during the term of his natural life, and as helpless as an infant; so was proportionally amazed and disappointed at recognizing the object of his search in a tall, handsome, soldier-like young fellow, quietly but expensively dressed, with the eye of a hawk, and the step of a leopard, firm and manly as became a captain in the Imperial Guard, yet almost graceful in its elastic softness of tread and lightness of motion.

"You are Colonel Mainwaring's groom, and not Mr. Darcy's, are you not?" asked he, in excellent English, "for I see that you carry a lion, and not the bull's-head upon your buttons. Is Mr. Darcy from home at present?"

"I am in the Colonel's service, sir," said the man, respectfully, "and am sent to bring you to the Priory. Mr. Darcy is in town, looking after his Parliamentary business, for he represents our borough now, and has not yet received your letter. Miss Leila opened it, I believe, taking for granted that it was about your coming down here; so I was directed to meet you at the station and bring you to the Priory, for the Hall is not yet fit to be inhabited. The carriage is in the yard, sir. Is this all your luggage?"

A mischievous smile passed over the face of the handsome Hungarian, as he heard of his letter having fallen into Leila's hands, and answering in the affirmative as regards the safety of his luggage, but in the negative as to driving up to the Priory, merrily stigmatizing as a gross impropriety, the habit of harnessing fine horses to wheeled conveyances, at least for any other purpose than artillery or ammunition-waggons, instead of riding them, with a decent regard to their natural gifts, inquired his way if he walked, and set off humming "the march from the Bronze Horse," with great vigour, as he stepped briskly out in the direction of the Priory. A most singular coincidence indeed it was, that the sight of the relic he had given her should set her off in this very tune, although she detested it most cordially, as we have learnt from her own lips, and that the instant he arrived at Midhampton, and heard of her having opened his letter, into the same ditty he plunged with all his heart and soul.

"She must be growing almost a young woman!" soliloquised he, thinking of "her," *i.e.*, the cat's grandmother, "what a sweetly pretty little fairy she was as quite a child, and so full of life and spirits! I wonder whether she is growing up as lovely as she promised to be! I always used to take for granted that Darcy would marry her, but his last letter looks as though

his thoughts were wandering in another direction ; not by the by that any one in his senses would ever think of exactly falling in love with such a mere child ; so perhaps he may take to her eventually after all. And she is remarkably pretty, at least she used to be, that is undeniable enough. 'Proh Jupiter !'' (Marcellus Aurantius was very classical in his ejaculations) "Whom have we here? Karl Dolchein! have you escaped the gallows so long as to have found your way to England? By my faith! but the devil does take excellent care of his own, to have preserved you all this time on the face of an earth, every tree of which must remind you of the mode of quitting this world compulsorily, adopted by many a better man than yourself; and every rivulet must recall to memory the streams of your native land running redly to the Theiss, stained with the blood of the noble-hearted victims whom your villanous treachery betrayed. By what dirty artifices do you earn your bread now, that I find you crawling about, like some loathsome reptile, defiling God's fair earth, in the very last country in which I expected to meet you?"

This polite greeting, delivered in German, with a very strong southern accent, hardly intelligible to more northern ears, was addressed to no less distinguished an individual than our revered friend Herr Von Krummacher, and had the effect of mightily discomposing that nobleman's equanimity. His face underwent every change of colour that a chameleon of average powers could have been reasonably expected to achieve—first red almost to purple, then a livid blueish-white, next a sallow yellow (which was its usual tinge), and finally a delicate primrose like his wife's dress-gloves, as he mistook the movement of Marcellus to his breast-pocket in search of his note-case for a blood-thirsty handling of his pistols.

"Have the goodness to stand before me with your face to the light, most excellent Karl," said the latter, seating himself composedly on the stepping-stone of a stile, and taking out a pocket-book, "and answer me a few little questions. I strongly advise you not to run away! because I cannot have the trouble of chasing you more than once; so shall be compelled to limit your locomotive powers to a very gentle walk indeed, if you do, and by a particularly disagreeable process too. There! that will do admirably! now hold up your head, and fancy yourself back again at Temesvar as a sentinel, and that I am the Grand Round challenging. Now! how do you get your living?"

"I shall answer no questions of yours, Count of —, for I recognize no right of yours to ask them," replied Krummacher, as we will still continue to call him, in a sullen voice, and with a very hang-dog expression of countenance. "I have no wish to molest you, and am at a loss to discover why you should desire to injure and insult me. And as for the objects of common life upbraiding me for my conduct, I think that the taunt of treachery comes with a singularly bad grace from you, whose very uniform ought to remind you of the old time, when the paltry frippery you are now so childlessly proud of wearing was as hateful to all your family as it is to me at this day; and the name of an Imperial Officer was enough to raise their rage like a leopard at the smell of blood. Which is the traitor, you or I? answer me that, you poor, pampered, well-flogged bloodhound of the Hapsburg!"

"Spare your heroics, my good friend!" replied Marcellus, as imperturbably, as though the address of his companion had been redolent of the most abject respect; "this is neither the fitting time nor place to discuss the politics of our unhappy country, nor are

you exactly the kind of person with whom I feel disposed to enter into such subjects. I ask you a plain, straightforward question, How do you get your living? and if you do not choose to give me an answer, I have nothing to do but to inquire of those who have kept their eye unceasingly upon you, however little you have known it. You are not the only man amongst your countrymen resident in this country who knows Marcellus Aurantius; and my inquiries will not be unanswered for a single week, of that I feel perfectly convinced. But giving me the trouble to ask will be accompanied by this trifling personal inconvenience to yourself, of bringing into very unenviable notoriety any little aberrations from the path of strict honesty of which you may have been guilty; for to imagine that you have lived entirely beyond the clutches of the law for a whole month upon end is more than I can easily credit, knowing and respecting your ingenuity in iniquity as I do. Now, do you intend giving me an answer, or not?"

"I write for an English newspaper," replied Krummacher, after a pause; "at least my wife translates my letters into that tongue, and the Londoners consider me a great master of their native language, for Pauline understands it perfectly."

"How did she learn it so thoroughly?" inquired the other; "she did not know ten words together not more than three years ago: besides which she has not been with you during the last twelvemonth at the very least to my certain knowledge."

Krummacher looked astounded at this comment upon his answer, and stammered out in broken language that the lady he meant was a sort of a wife, although there might be some trifling inaccuracy in the expression which he had used. However, his answer was substantially true, so might all the

saints in the calendar befriend him in the hour of necessity !

“Oh ! you have renounced the Moslem faith, have you ?” quoth Marcellus, jestingly ; “that was very foolish of you indeed, because according to your new religion you had some faint spark of hope, that your villanies might be forgiven you by Mahomet for having caused the death of so many accursed Nazarenes, if your prophet chanced to turn out in the right ; whereas by returning to your old creed, you know what must become of you beyond all reasonable hope. But never mind ! it was an abominably poor chance either way, so it does not signify much. So you write for the papers, do you ? on politics then, I presume, for I know your love of fishing in troubled waters of that sort.”

Krummacher assented, and then added rather incautiously, “that his wife gave lessons in her native language, and so earned a livelihood for him, as well as herself, by her exertions.” This was a terrible blunder to commit before so shrewd a personage as his present tormentor—a fact vividly brought to his notice by the very next words which saluted his ears.

“So you have set up two wives at once ! that is a relic of your Mussulman habits, I imagine ! Listen to me, you black-hearted villain ! have you not married in a perfectly legal manner, as far as your unhappy victim is able to judge of the ceremony, some deluded creature, who is unaware of your first wife being still alive ? Answer me, scoundrel, or..... ;” a gesture more significant than flattering filled up the uncompleted sentence.

“No ! on my soul, by all that I hold dear, no !” cried the lying rascal, with every appearance of earnestness, “she is my wife only by courtesy,”

“Do you pretend to tell me,” replied Marcellus,

scornfully, "that such a woman would be employed by English ladies to teach their daughters. Pooh! my good Karl! you must fancy yourself back in ——, where was that little German Duchy you had run away from when I first knew you?—Well, never mind the name of it; but England is not the land of such happy freedom from prejudice, I know well."

"I did not say that!" growled the exasperated Karl; "I merely said that she agreed to keep the secret, and that is perfectly true. Is there anything so very strange in a woman being willing to conceal her own dishonour?"

"Certainly not!" retorted Marcellus, "if the matter rested entirely with her, I could readily imagine that it would never be divulged; but there is something incredibly strange in your keeping your promise of secrecy after the very first drunken quarrel in which you were involved; she would have been kicked down stairs, and expelled from the house with every disgraceful abuse that your foul tongue could utter, I know full well, had that been the case; so pardon me, if I decline taking your soul as a pledge of your veracity."

"Where is the use of asking questions, if you pretend to know the answers better than I do myself?" replied Krummacher, testily. "But what more do you require to know? I have already told you how I live, and you appear to disbelieve every word I utter: have you any other demand to make?"

"None; but the name which you honour with your selection as a *nom de guerre*, for I presume that you do not retain your own, and also the address of the residence at present beatified by the presence of the great political author of the day. I should think that your sentiments must possess a most captivating novelty for English readers; but shall soon satisfy my curiosity on that head, for old acquaintance' sake, and

shall probably become a diligent reader of the newspaper you enlighten with your experiences."

Having obtained the desired information, Marcellus Aurantius took leave of his "old friend under new colours," and made the best of his way to the Priory, where a hearty welcome from the old Colonel, and an extremely flattering greeting from the pretty Leila, awaited him on his arrival.

And since the reader may perhaps feel some inclination to become better acquainted with the previous history of a personage who has now made his appearance on the stage as a principal character in the drama, and who will eventually play no mean part in the destiny of our friend Phil, I will take the opportunity of leaving him at dinner, in a company too large to admit of confidential or private subjects being discussed, to narrate as much of his early life as may enable those who wish to know more of him to understand his position, at the time in which we now introduce him to the society of —shire.

Marcellus Aurantius was the grandson of a Hungarian noble of the very highest rank, but having been deprived of both his parents while yet a mere infant, had been brought up almost exclusively in the family of his maternal grandfather, whose political prejudices were as violently Imperial as those of the paternal house of the young Marcellus were national and turbulent, almost to republicanism. Which difference not improbably arose from the fact, that while the one family regarded the Court as the fountain of all the honours and emoluments with which it was loaded, the other was wont to boast that there would have been neither an Empire to grant the favours, nor a Christian nation east of France to receive them, had it not been for God in heaven, and the Aurantii upon earth: a sentiment which very naturally advanced them very

little in the favour of the powers that be. But whatever may have been the cause of this difference of political prejudices between the two houses, the fact itself was beyond doubt; so that when civil war rent the whole Empire from one end to another like some terrible volcano, the great family of the Aurantii, who had long cherished the most brilliant hopes of this promising youth—on whom as their future head they lavished the most brilliant anticipations of his destined importance in a new and regenerated kingdom, freed from foreign oppression, and purified from official corruption by his agency—beheld, with half-incredulous amazement and dismay, the young Marcellus bearing arms with the most uncompromising loyalty to his Imperial Master against the very cause for which they were shedding their blood, and expending their treasures with such heroic fidelity. It is true that at his earnest request, and under the guarantee of a well-known Imperialist General for his trust-worthiness, he was permitted to serve in the Milanese, instead of being reduced to the painful necessity of meeting in open field his own blood-relations, and adding unnecessary pain to that which he naturally experienced in this disunion with those who were nearest to him. But this went for nothing in the eyes of his infuriated relatives, and while the war lasted his name was never mentioned but with execrations upon his treachery, or threats of vengeance, should a convenient opportunity arise for wreaking it.

He had been severely wounded in one of Radetsky's latest battles, and receiving permission to recruit his strength by change of scene and climate, had accepted an invitation given him by an English officer, whom he had met at Munich, during a short visit to that city, and so became an inmate of the house of Colonel Mainwaring for the period of wellnigh six months,

though his original intention was to stay with him three weeks at the very longest. But the partiality which the Colonel had begun to entertain towards him, during their first acquaintance, had ripened into regard and intimate friendship—not only in consequence of the many agreeable qualities of his young guest, but also from the discovery that he had been the principal instrument in rescuing from a miserable death a gallant boy whom he loved as his own son, whom a love of adventure had induced to plunge himself in the war of Independence, and who wellnigh paid the penalty of his rashness with his life. When the National cause was fast becoming desperate, Marcellus had returned for a flying visit to his native land, to exert himself in behalf of his unhappy relatives, many of whom were already awaiting the meed of their rebellion in the prisons of the State; and was enabled by the exercise of his interest as a well-known loyalist, to obtain the pardon or commutation of sentence of the less notorious offenders; while candour compels me to own that his political bias to the Imperial cause, and his own individual devotion to his master, did not sufficiently succeed in drowning the voice of affection for his family to prevent him from taking a somewhat active part in the escape of other members of his house, for whose forgiveness he felt it was vain to plead.

Amongst the objects of his benevolent interference between the dupes of a false enthusiasm and its terrible consequences, was a young Englishman, whom he discovered playing hide and seek with the blood-hounds of the law in a small village in the Banat; or to speak more correctly, who introduced himself to him as a friend of Colonel Mainwaring, whom he knew to have been acquainted with Marcellus at Munich. The whimsical coolness with which that youth confessed that his only excuse for his present position was that

he always was a fool wherever there was a row going on, and that it had been a very stirring time and excellent for circulating the blood; combined with the preposterous stress he laid upon being at Cambridge in time to train for a grand boat-race between the captains and the University, and his gay, devil-may-care manners altogether so won upon the good-will of the gallant Hungarian, that he incurred no little risk of materially damaging his prospects for life, by smuggling this amateur in conspiracy through the midst of his enemies, disguised as a photographic artist, by whose assistance he professed to be mightily aided in certain surveys he was then engaged upon.

In this youth there can be no great difficulty in recognizing the erratic Phil, whose love of adventure led him anywhere for the sake of excitement, and who had plunged into this turmoil entirely for the chance of seeing strange things, and not in the slightest degree from love of the political principles of the party he espoused. There can be little wonder, therefore, that Marcellus Aurantius was held in such high regard by Colonel Mainwaring, between whose family and Philip Darcy such affectionate intimacy existed, more especially when his generous humanity obtained such excellent foils in the savage cruelty of more than one of his brother-loyalists.

The Colonel had not then settled at Midhampton, in which neighbourhood indeed he was a very recent importation at the time when our history opens, but resided in London, and was famous for his splendid hospitalities, and his cordial reception of foreigners of birth and talent; so that our young soldier had secured to himself very comfortable quarters for the perfecting of a convalescence, which, the war with Piedmont being now concluded, he was in no indiscreet hurry to pronounce sufficiently completed, to permit

him to return to his military duties. Week after week, therefore, passed away, and his last few days of London had not yet come to a termination.

By the childish beauty and wild, eccentric talents of Leila he had been extremely taken, and had become her most docile pupil in the arduous task of mastering the English idioms used in general conversation, for he had studied our language from boyhood, as regards grammar and composition. His little instructress, it must be confessed, diverted herself occasionally at his expense in her usual merry manner, by teaching him divers slang expressions of very doubtful utility to a foreigner. Witness her causing him, in speaking to Lady Mawkish, to compare Her Majesty's riding at a review to "galloping like blazes down the line," to the ineffable astonishment of that stately dame; yet upon the whole the little maiden got her pupil on extremely well, and made him the admiration of those who thought it a prodigious advantage to be able to talk to the lion in their own tongue.

In return for these services, he had procured coins and relics of all kinds for the cabinet of curiosities which she was collecting under Phil's superintendence—amongst which contributions the most remarkable were John Sobieski's stirrup, and a missal bound in the skin of a Turk, who, after having slaughtered whole coveys of Aurantii "in the good old time," had himself been captured, done to death, and skinned! Whether alive or dead, deponent stateth not; but as the leather is incomparably better when taken off a living body, and the Count was a man of considerable taste, public opinion ran in favour of the former supposition. But however this might have been, there is little reason to doubt that he bound a missal in the hide of a true Believer, and presented it to the abbot of an adjoining monastery, as payment in full for any

little peccadilloes he might have committed; but quarrelling with him afterwards, he sacked the sanctuary of his ghostly neighbour the next year, and took his present back again, together with abundance of sheep and oxen, a goodly service of plate, several skins of generous wine, and the abbot's favourite niece, whom he married out of hand, in reverential respect for her tremendous temper; which promised well, in his opinion, to transmit to his posterity that fiery wilfulness, which he held to be indispensable for the chiefs of a house to whom the wolves were but gentle and insipid beasts in violence and detestation of order. So the missal descended in due course of time to Marcellus, and was by him presented to Leila.

From this pleasant, but not over-military life, he was summoned by the most urgent supplications from his family, to once more exercise his interest, as a loyal subject of the Emperor, to rescue his kinsmen from their well-merited doom; and yielding to their request, set off for Presburg upon his mission of humanity. It was during his exertions in their behalf, and in the course of his investigations into the identity of the traitor who had first enticed them into sedition, and then ruthlessly sold them to their enemies (for the existence of such a person was beyond doubt), that he fell in with Karl Dolchein, whose acquaintance we have made under his assumed name of Krummacher; and it was by means of proving his instrumentality in many acts of the most double-faced treachery, as much as by his own high favour at Court, that he was enabled to succeed in his errand of mercy.

He settled in his native country immediately upon the restoration of tranquillity, with the double object of serving his Imperial master by reconciling the adherents of his family to the existing Government, and also of protecting his clients from the cruel persecutions

of the servile officials, who desired to prove their zeal in the cause of order, by heaping on the heads of all who were suspected of past disaffection the bitterest insult and oppression. Such revenues as remained to him after the reckless sale and waste of all moveable property, to which his grandfather had resorted, including the destruction of much that was valuable in the common course of war, he distributed with princely liberality among the poorer dependants of his family, and contented himself with a very moderate addition to his means as a soldier, a profession in which he was considered certain to rise to the very highest distinction.

Such was Marcellus Aurantius, when we present him to our reader, and such the nature of his first acquaintance with Philip Darcy, and the highly-to-be-respected Karl von Krummacher.

“So my good friend Phil has become a Member of Parliament, I find,” said he to Leila, as he rejoined the ladies in the drawing-room, after the most bore-ridden dinner-party he had ever witnessed, in which the merits of the various candidates for the mastership of Midhampton workhouse had been fully discussed. “And to my intense amusement, I find that he is violently Conservative in his politics! and more amicably disposed towards foreign Courts than is exactly agreeable even to the bulk of his supporters in many respects, and most especially friendly to His Imperial and Apostolic Majesty (whom God and our Lady shield from evil!), which is the drollest conversion of which I ever heard. You English have funny ways of showing your love, Miss Leila! and I begin to believe that it is indispensable for perfect friendship in your eyes to have a good tough fight first. Do you know that I once went out with Darcy to settle our differences by the agency of pistols; but while our

seconds were measuring the ground, we both began to laugh, and think that we were making great fools of ourselves. So we shook hands, and I remember that I fought the major of a Bohemian regiment instead."

"Wherefore, O man of peace?" asked Leila, settling herself comfortably in her easy chair for a cozy chat by the fire; "what offence did he give you?"

"Merely this," replied Marcellus, "he was pleased to grumble very much at being disappointed of the sport of seeing the duel, which he had ridden four miles to witness, and evinced a strong desire to fight Darcy himself, as I had declined the office; but that would not have done at all, so after a little altercation, I undertook to accommodate him with an antagonist, as he was so bellicosely disposed that day."

"And how did the encounter terminate?" asked the lady.

"I hardly know," answered the Hungarian, modestly, "it was a kind of drawn battle. Two of his fingers were picked up during the morning by a patrol, so I presume that he cut them off against my sabre; but I had hardly the best of it on the whole, I fear, nevertheless."

"Dear me! how delicately you speak of your victory," quoth Leila, jestingly; "I suppose that you are so vain of your Italian laurels, that you take no account of any others. Not that I see anything particularly praiseworthy in these savage duels," she added, rather more gravely than usual.

"As to my victory, Miss Mainwaring," said Marcellus, laughing, "you would not have esteemed that very highly, had you seen the involuntary sommersault your humble servant performed upon the turf, in acknowledgment of a blow in the face from the hilt of the major's sabre! There is very little doubt that had it been in action, instead of a formal duel, he

would have had my head in exchange for his fingers. The Saints defend me from all such victories in future ! And as for Italy, I have no scruple in owning that the men who faced the Piedmontese had something to boast of if they were not absolutely defeated ; but as for planting laurels, in honour of routing them in the field, that is a very different affair, and what no one but a lying braggart, who never really witnessed that gallant campaign, would venture to speak of. I dare say that I am a little vain of the experience in war which I gained so early in such an excellent school—but none of my conceit on that head arises, I can assure you, from any exaggerated opinion of our superiority in the field to the enemy who opposed us throughout with such wellnigh incredible perseverance and courage ; nor do I think that any real soldier who served in the Milanese will ever say a disrespectful word of the foes he there encountered. I am no greater advocate of duelling than you are, but upon the occasion of which I have just spoken, it appeared to be the only hope of preventing a more fatal quarrel arising between Darcy and the over-bearing Bohemian : and you can hardly blame me, I think, if I thought it preferable to risk my own life, rather than that of a friend and a guest in such a rencontre. But jesting apart, my intimacy with Darcy increased most wonderfully from that very day, and I think that the same feeling is traceable to some extent in all your nation.”

“How dearly I shall soon love little Mrs. Krummacher then,” said Leila, laughing, “for I was in a perfect tornado with her this morning. But I forgot that you don’t know who she is—well, never mind, she’s a loathsome caterpillar, and I’ll tell you all about her to-morrow. But now I want to know whether you have brought me all the commissions you promised to execute for me?”

"I know her husband well enough, at any rate," replied Marcellus, very rudely omitting to make any report upon the commissions, "and a greater scoundrel it is impossible to imagine. But I intended to ask you what you knew about them, as soon as I could find a convenient opportunity, and I am exceedingly glad that you appear able to give me the information I require, for I am anxious to have a clue to this fellow's proceedings, especially as I suspect him of behaving most brutally ill to the poor caterpillar."

"Why, to be sure he does beat her, but no more than is good for her, I dare say," replied Leila, demurely, "and drags her about the house by the hair, which goes for very little in my opinion, for I always take the furry sorts myself by their coats, when I want to throw them over the wall; but as to treating her worse than she richly deserves, that is impossible, if he were to put her to the torture every day."

She then proceeded to unfold the history of Pauline's early flirtation with Philip Darcy, and all the bedevilments thereout arising, to the commingled amazement and discomfiture of her warlike friend, who now began to fully appreciate both the reasons of Krummacher for being so anxious to get rid of his wife by so convenient a means as proving her previous marriage, and her own ready acquiescence in any plan, which not only freed her from such a brute, but provided her with a protector, in case of the nullity of her present union coming to light. He made no comment, however, upon Leila's narrative of any kind whatsoever, at least during the time of its recital, but laying it up in his mind for consideration, pronounced it all to be a most romantic history, and very prettily told by his fair companion, wished his friend Darcy safe out of his scrape; and turning the conversation to the commissions which he had been directed to execute,

inquired whether it was Miss Leila's pleasure to have them brought down for inspection. He had been more successful, he said, than he had ventured to expect, and hoped that the new additions to her cabinet would reflect no discredit on his talents as a collector of curiosities.

But that versatile-minded damsel, having once got upon the topic of Phil's woes, or rather of those of poor dear Florence, to whom she was sincerely attached, was in no humour any longer for her once-coveted playthings, but subsided into a melancholy bemoaning of the sorrow brought upon her friends by that never-sufficiently-to-be-crushed-into-the-dust caterpillar, copiously interspersed with the most blood-thirsty maledictions upon that offending insect, which, by the by, constituted with that very kind-hearted, although fiery little maiden, the full extent of wrath to which she ever arrived; for few people had less power to harm even a fly, than this stern suggestor of the most refined tortures, so long as it was only in words that she was called upon to be so unrelenting towards her enemies.

Miss Dosy broke up the *tête-à-tête* with a stringent injunction to Leila, "to play to the gentlemen without any further asking, and not to go on talking a horse's hind leg off in that ridiculous manner."

"It would be more to the purpose if I could talk your Bohemian friend's fingers on again, Marcellus," said Leila to her knight, as she rose to obey her aunt's orders; "you needn't get out my music-books, thank you, I am going to play my new Pot Pourri by memory."

Whereupon she dashed headlong into a most whimsical medley of incongruous tunes, excellently performed and most ingeniously interwoven (for the child had a very good taste for music, if her fickle love of

novelty had permitted her to cultivate it), but succeeding one another in an order, the connexion of which sorely puzzled Miss Dosy to decipher, but which the reader perhaps may better comprehend. Commencing with "St. Patrick's Day in the Morning," she wandered through half a dozen Irish songs without stopping, most of which were to be found among the patriotic lamentations of Tom Moore over the enslaved condition of his country, and from them turned to "See the Conquering Hero Comes," thence into the Austrian National Hymn, and dipping into the "March from the Bronze Horse," concluded with "I'm Ower Young to Marry Yet," amid the enthusiastic applause of the gentlemen then and there assembled, the voice of Marcellus Aurantius being by no means the least lavish of his approbation. "Alas! regardless of their doom, the little victims play." Had he better understood the meaning of that last air, in such ominous conjunction with the Imperial Hymn and the song he himself had taught her, perhaps his reception of her minstrelsy had been less energetic; but, on the other hand, perhaps not, for there is nothing so very awful in the prospect of being annexed, in due course of time, to an exceedingly pretty, lively, clever girl, with a handsome fortune, and a family scutcheon of unblemished honour for at least eight centuries.

CHAPTER III.

"A SEEDTIME OF BENEVOLENCE PRODUCES A HARVEST OF SYMPATHY."

THE news of the sudden and alarming illness of Florence Montgomery was received in the neighbourhood with feelings and remarks of the widest difference which could well exist upon such a subject, as the unexpected prostration of health, talents, and activity of the highest order, beneath the withering breath of the angel of sickness. Pauline rejoiced most sincerely, and sneeringly remarked to her new friend Mrs. Whiting, that as Miss Montgomery professed to be so much fitter for heaven than other people, it would be only cruelty to desire to delay her journey to so desirable a haven of rest.

Mr. McKenzie improved the occasion by delivering a very violent sermon upon Papistical practices, including absolution and extreme unction, with several broad hints that the parish might see something of the kind before very long in a quarter where the real sentiments had hitherto been carefully, if ineffectually, concealed, and concluded by assuring his flock, that although Dives in the parable had doubtlessly received every spiritual consolation, of which the Jewish Church admitted, and was buried with all pomp and ceremony, it did not save his immortal soul; nor, by parity of reasoning, would the mummeries and juggleries of the Romish heresy be found of avail, even though never so cleverly veiled under a show of respect to primitive custom. The effect of his elo-

quence on one at least of his audience was striking enough, as we shall presently have an opportunity of learning, but by the bulk of his hearers it was received with a disapprobation which they dared not openly evince towards the favourite minister of the great Earl, who seldom failed to make his displeasure severely felt at the annual distribution of charity at the Castle, since a word from him, clothed in the sleek hypocrisy of unwillingness to be the means of depriving any man of his noble patron's bounty, which he well knew how to assume, was almost invariably followed by a cold withdrawal of all his favours from the offending party, on the part of the infatuated Lord Trimmington.

But Hezekiah Trotters, the chosen mouth-piece of Mr. Sawdry, who was currently believed to adhere in his extempore sermons to the written instructions of that orphan-loving gentleman with a fidelity worthy of Homer's Iris, was perhaps even grander in his malignity than the reverend pastor above-mentioned ; for killing Florence outright, he preached her funeral sermon upon the appropriate text, "Go, see now this cursed woman and bury her, for she is a king's daughter," in which he triumphantly proved what an excellent riddance the people would have of her, who ensnared them with her treacherous wiles, and led them from the saving doctrine into the mists of prelati- cal error, by her specious charities and smooth-tongued, plausible good humour ; and who, practising a more cruel deception than that of Jacob when he defrauded his elder brother of his birthright, had cheated them of their righteous hatred of priestcraft by coals and blankets, yea, by soup and cloaks of the scarlet hue beloved by the Monster of the Seven Hills.

But far different was the scene presented in the

quiet rural church where Florence herself was wont to attend, and which seemed hardly like itself to the well-filled benches of tidy, orderly Sunday-school children, or the pews immediately under the reading-desk, long appropriated by universal consent to the old and infirm, who could not hear the service so well if crammed into the corner anywhere out of the way, as is but too usually the case. There, indeed, her bright sunny face, and light elastic step, were terribly missed by those who had been accustomed, Sunday after Sunday, to wait at the door, in order to doff their hats or drop their curtseys to that faithful stewardess of God's good gifts of wealth and station; and heartily did they all wish, as their eyes fell upon the vacant place which she had hitherto filled, at all seasons and in all weathers, through summer heat and winter cold, walking through sleet and rain into which she would not have sent another on any errand of her own, except of the most vital importance, that they might soon again behold her there, restored to health and tranquillity of mind. And when, in the course of the second lesson of the morning service, the clergyman read to them of the gentle Dorcas, and how the weeping recipients of her bounty showed to Peter the tokens of her works of love while yet on earth, their eyes turned to the well-known pew, where her much cherished little Menie was sitting with streaming eyes, but calm and quiet, while the unrestrained, impulsive grief of Leila was heard by all around in quick, convulsive sobs of wild affection, for that morning's report of Florence's condition was all but hopeless. And let the enemies of our Liturgy say what they will of the cold formalities of our mode of worship, it was with no chilling indifference, or mere lip service, but with hearts full of enthusiasm and good-will, that the little flock there assembled responded to the an-

nouncement of their pastor, that "the prayers of this congregation are earnestly desired for Florence Montgomery."

Darcy had been informed by telegraph of the terrible crisis which had now arrived, and was expected during the afternoon, for the wanderings of the poor sufferer harped so unceasingly upon some terrible and important question, which she desired to put to him, and in her quieter and more lucid moments she pined so piteously over some secret she had locked in her own bosom, but of which she desired above all things to unburthen herself before her lover, that it was at length agreed to attempt the desperate expedient, should she ever recover her faculties enough to admit of her conversing on the subject next her heart, of putting the momentous question to Darcy in the presence of her father and the physician, and trusting to its issue proving satisfactory enough to remove the hidden sorrow which was weighing her to her grave.

Dr. Seaton was decidedly of opinion that the risk incurred in moving her from her bed to the sofa of the adjoining dressing-room, and even the excitement unavoidably accompanying such a meeting as that which they contemplated, was slight, compared to the ruinous strain upon the nerves of her present suspense, and if the question received a favourable response, well and good; if not—the worthy physician sighed, and pressing the hand of his old neighbour and fellow-countryman in a friendly clasp, whispered gently in his ear, "it can hardly do much harm even then, unless it be quicker, a very little quicker in its progress."

So the thing was settled, Darcy sent for, and what now remained, was to watch with avidity for her return to consciousness and ability to perform her part in the arrangement. As Leila and her handsome

guest were strolling down that afternoon to the station to meet Darcy on his arrival, if the message had fortunately reached him in time to bring him down by the first train from town, they encountered Walter Tomnoddy, who in a very strange, excited manner rushed up to Leila, and began to inquire after Florence with a trembling anxiety, the cause of which she could not comprehend.

"They tell me that the poor creature is dying," said he, seizing his companion by both hands as if he were almost beside himself with horror, "and that the abominable lies that have been told about her by these dirty Germans, who stink of stale tobacco-smoke and bad scent enough to poison a pig, have caused it all. Good heaven! if it be so, my brother Augustus has absolutely murdered her, for I know that he encouraged these reports: first, to serve his electioneering ends, and then out of spite, because Mr. Montgomery and the Colonel exposed his shabby tricks; it is every bit as bad as shooting her, I declare, and I am so ashamed of the whole lot of us, that I could bury myself alive. I say, Leila! you and I were great friends once upon a time, till that fat-chapped old McKenzie put an end to our playing together, so I hope you will do me a favour—just tell poor Florence, if you ever see her again, that I am very sorry for her, there's a good fellow—a kind-hearted little girl, I mean—and that I will keep the book she gave me as long as ever I live, although I was such a fool as only to laugh when she pressed me to take it, and that I will say my prayers every night and morning openly and fairly, if I am jeered at ever so much, and I'll try not to be such a good-for-nothing blackguard any more. But I suppose that I am not to go back to Eton again, so that is no such great promise, for I have so bitterly offended my father and Augustus,

that I am going to be sent to Rotterdam to become a merchant, for they all say I am not fit to belong to them any longer, and that I must learn to get my own living in another class of society, for they have quite done with me from this day."

"In what manner have you so highly displeased your father?" asked Marcellus. The boy looked anxiously in his face.

"Are not you the Count of —," said he, "that they were talking about at the Castle to-day?"

Marcellus nodded a good-humoured assent.

"Then you are one of the favourite officers at the Imperial court, I believe," continued Walter, "and could give a poor little unlucky wretch like me a lift in the world, if you chose. By Jove! I wish you would get me into your service. I'd fight like a tiger, and be as faithful as a dog. You've no idea of how sick I am of Greek and Latin, and of old McKenzie's lectures upon 'the manners and customs of the ancients,' about which he knows as much as a pig does of playing the violin, but he must say something to keep up his character as a scholar before my father. I wish most heartily that I was a soldier!"

"Well, perhaps I may be able to help you to obtain your wish," replied Marcellus smiling, and regarding with the eye of a connoisseur in such matters, the active frame, bright eyes, and intelligent face of the boy before him; "but I must see a little of you first. Now tell me, what scrape have you been getting into at home, for I must know that, before I pretend to interfere?"

"Why, then," said Walter, rather sheepishly, "you must understand that Parson McKenzie preached a very violent sermon this morning, all about poor Florence Montgomery (any fool could see that), and he was chuckling over it at luncheon, and spouting

out all kinds of rubbish about Rome, and tractarianism, and heaven knows what, to my intense disgust, and the great delectation of my father, who thinks him quite a saint—I don't. He's very dirty in his habits certainly, and a great fool, both of which are very saintly peculiarities I believe, from what I have read of such people; but there the similarity ends, for he certainly is not dead to the world, but as lively as a kitten when his nose catches the scent of anything to be got; and as for mortifying the flesh, the only way in which he does that is by over-eating himself, and then he just does suffer. If you were to see him after dinner when he has had too many truffles, you'd never forget it; he writhes about in his chair, and turns all sorts of colours, like a dying dolphin, till we give him a little brandy, which is what Solomon means by staying a fellow with flagons I suppose, though Roger Merrivale, who is a clever chap enough, thinks it means clapping a hot bottle to his chest," he concluded very delicately, with a whimsical glance at his friend Leila.

"Perhaps so," interrupted Marcellus, "but I want to hear of you, not about him."

"Certainly," quoth the boy, demurely, "of course you shall. Well, I was in a great rage, and behaved very rudely to him. So my father told me to leave the room, and get my Greek Testament to read to Mr. McKenzie as usual, but I refused, and declared that I would shy it at his head, if he came near me to teach me, for that I would never learn another lesson of such a slanderous old blackguard.

"My father was very much exasperated at this, and said that if I would not obey my tutor, it was useless to attempt bringing me up as his son, and that I had better take my own course. I am afraid that I was very impertinent in return; anyhow, there

is a tremendous row, and I quite expect that I shall be packed off to a relation of my mother, who is a merchant in Holland, and one of the wealthiest men in his city."

Although it did not strike Marcellus that it was very probable that an English nobleman would condemn his son to banishment and a merchant's counting-house, for a boyish offence like this, of mutinying against his tutor, and speaking disrespectfully in the hurry of his excitement to his father himself, yet he was so pleased with the boy's apparent gallantry and frankness, and there was something in his desire to bear arms which so accorded with his own ideas, that he responded most cordially to Walter's inclination to see more of him, and promising to call upon the Earl the next day, and see whether he could do anything for him, dismissed his young petitioner, with a recommendation to beg his father's pardon, and to take his lesson from Mr. McKenzie as usual, if called upon to do so; the first part of which advice Walter cheerfully promised to follow, but treated the latter as not to be thought of.

Hardly had he left them, than a column of white smoke in the distance warned them of the approaching arrival of the down train; so quickening their steps into a fast walk, and ultimately into an actual run, they appeared on the platform precisely in time to receive their promised guest, Philip Darcy.

"Do you bring with you life or death?" whispered Leila, as she drew him aside for an instant, after he had received his old protector with a cordiality befitting his claims upon his good-will; "we can all easily guess of what nature Florence's question is, and on your answer hang the issues of either extreme."

"What question, Leila?" returned Darcy. "I

only received intelligence that she was so alarmingly ill that your father wished me to come down directly, to bid her a last farewell, as I imagined, if it must needs be that we part ; but I heard nothing whatsoever of any question that was to be asked."

"There is a question then, Phil," replied Leila, earnestly, "over which poor Floss sorrows so bitterly that it seems to be crushing the very life within her. Do you fear to reply ? does your heart suggest to you anything which she can demand to have explained, the true and honest answer to which will be only converting a harrowing doubt into a miserable certainty ? If so, do not bear the terrible tidings yourself, but let me carry her the fatal message, that although you will not stand by her couch with a lie in your right hand, yet neither can you purge yourself of the wretched stain on your honour and your real freedom."

"No, Leila, no ! If that dear life hangs on my perfect ability to answer anything she may ask, it is as safe as though health once more coloured her cheek. And I, too, can make a very fair guess at the subject of her inquiry ; if it be so, believe me, that I can conscientiously declare my perfect innocence."

During their drive to the Priory, for the carriage was put into requisition to return, though Leila and her knight had preferred to walk when they sallied forth to meet their friend, Darcy evinced such symptoms of a restless and disturbed state of mind, talking and laughing in so strange and forced a manner, and so evidently struggling to keep down his feelings by main force, as it were, that Leila became alarmed for his fitness, as well as that of Florence, to encounter the trying interview, and with more prudence than might have been expected of her, ordered the coachman to drive

round by Avenue Road, and stopping the carriage at Dr. Seaton's ran into the house of the worthy physician to report progress. In a few minutes, a footman appeared, with Dr. Seaton's compliments, and a request that Mr. Darcy would do him the favour of coming in. Phil obeyed without hesitation, and Marcellus Aurantius finding himself condemned to a solitude of rather dubious duration, was suddenly seized with a pious inclination to pay his vows to "Our Lady," and learning from the coachman that there was a Romanist chapel within a few hundred yards, which was open upon Sundays during the whole of the afternoon, departed in a most exemplary manner, to work off his arrears of devotion, being in this no bad type of mankind at large, who, dedicating the best part of their lives to business, ambition, or pleasure, turn to their religious duties at that period when they have nothing else to do.

Meanwhile, Phil was undergoing a scrutinizing examination from Dr. Seaton, who at first sharing Leila's apprehensions, was gradually convinced of the self-control of his new patient, as he prosecuted his investigations into a firmness upon which so much depended. So having reason to expect that there would be an interval at least during the forthcoming evening, though no one could foresee how long it might last, in which the interview could take place, it was arranged that Darcy should call at the Manor at seven o'clock, and that if it were found practicable to carry out their plan, no time should be lost in so doing, as the strain on the nerves was the principal danger to be apprehended, and on the speedy removal or alleviation of that the success of the experiment depended.

"I suppose I must give up saying of you that

you have a head, only in the same sense as that in which pins have," said the Doctor, jestingly, as he handed Leila to the carriage; "you have been a very thoughtful, sensible little girl, to-day. Well, Rome was once saved by geese, you know! Good-bye."

CHAPTER IV.

DARCY "MINISTERS TO A MIND DISEASED."

IN the self-same room in which we met our heroine in the commencement of this history, and in the very same easy chair, with the Persian cat at her feet, and everything connected with the scene unaltered, except her own poor wasted form, sat Florence Montgomery, awaiting the expected visit, the purport of which had been gently broken to her by Dr. Seaton. But stay ! I am wrong when I say that all was unchanged except herself, for in the corner of the room between the fire-place and the door, crouched little Menie, who, weary with her constant watching, and overcome by anxiety to learn the result of what she had been led to suppose was Dr. Seaton's critical visit, for of Darcy's summons she had not been informed, had fallen asleep, leaning against the wall, with the tears glittering on her long, dark eye-lashes, in the rays of the lamp which stood upon the table. Puss, indeed, still gambolled around her mistress, inviting her to play, and half mechanically, with her unvarying good temper, Florence languidly accepted the invitation, by dangling the green slipper before her as usual, but the sunny smile and merry face of former days was changed and faded now, and what remained was more like the peaceful calmness of one who foresees the beginning of the end, and is willing to go, than the mirth of the joyous maiden of the opening year. Peaceful and calm in good truth she

looked at last, for her loving, trustful spirit no longer doubted the innocence of him to whom her question was to be addressed; she could not suppose him ignorant of what it would be, or so base as to deceive her entire confidence, and as little did she believe that he would meet her face to face, to openly and heartlessly rend from her the last tie to life, and with his own lips seal the death-warrant of all her hopes.

So far, therefore, all was tranquillity within, and the dread enemy had already received an important check in his progress, yet her thoughts were very, very solemn and mournful, devoid of earthly hope, and concentrated almost entirely upon the welfare of others. She thought of the many objects of her charitable care, and what would become of them when she was removed; she felt, indeed, in the instance of the aged and infirm, that her father would scrupulously carry out her wishes, and be to them all that a man can be, which, compared to such gentle interest as that of an amiable and high-minded woman, is very little after all; but when she mused over the destiny of her younger flock, upon whose education and training she had expended so much time and energy, she sighed to think that not even he, kind father as he was, could fill any portion of her place there, for if not in vital points of religion, yet still in form and system, an impassable gulf stood between her faith and his, and in the sincere adherent of the Scottish kirk, the enthusiastic, devoted daughter of the primitive, Apostolic church, could find no fit successor. She thought of Menie, that cherished little sister of her adoption, of her noble and high heart, her immense capabilities of good, but proud, independent nature, needing a loving friend to guide it, not a harsh censor, or indiscriminating repressor of her eccentric theories; she thought, too, and perhaps as

mournfully as in any of her reveries, of the brilliant talents, but erratic, unbridled disposition of the wayward Leila, and sorrowfully remembering how closely side by side flourished intellect and foibles, the germs of virtues above the average, and the roots of fearful evils in that impulsive heart, she was tempted to think of her also, that she could fain have her with her a little longer, if by Divine mercy she might mould her feelings to their highest purposes. Altogether she felt that the world had many sweet, innocent ties, which might well excuse her if she could not, without a pang, lay her own hand in the cold clasp of death, and it was only when she reflected that Philip perhaps would more cheerfully bear his doom, and adapt himself to his new responsibilities, if she were removed, that she felt quite contented to "turn her face to the wall," but when that thought prevailed, her resignation almost took the form of actual wish to die.

While thus she mused, the avenue-gate bell rang, and a carriage rolled up to the door, causing the colour to rise on the pale cheek of the invalid, and her heart to flutter with irrepressible emotion. After a brief pause, Dr. Seaton entered the room, and whispering, "He has arrived! For your father's sake, and that of all of us, who know and value you as you deserve, be very calm!" paved the way for the looked-for visitor, and Philip Darcy, bursting from the detaining grasp of her father, rushed forward, and threw himself at her feet, as he raised her wasted fingers to his lips in agitation too great for words.

"Philip," said Florence, in a low voice, bending her head forward till her luxuriant tresses, but very carelessly confined by Kathleen, in her over-anxiety to spare unnecessary fatigue to her adored mistress, burst from their bondage, and streamed over the kneel-

ing form of her young lover, "I have a question to ask you, which has haunted me for some time with such unrelenting malignity, that it has wellnigh unhinged my reason, and I implore you to answer me truly and honestly, even though the confession colour your cheek with shame and penitence, and wound my ears with the severest pang they have ever experienced. I have been told that the marriage in Scotland, even although you may not have regarded it as binding, would not have ill-befitted your honour or your sense of compassion towards one who, misguided and wicked as she was, had some claim upon you, whatever may have been her position with the world at large. It is more than hinted that the object of the fraud practised upon you was to deceive you into an act of reparation, which, in the opinion of your victim, you ought to have offered of your own free will. As you value my friendship, tell me, are these things so?"

"By all my hopes of happiness, dearest Florence, no!" passionately exclaimed the young man. "Reckless, foolish, selfishly short-sighted, if you will, I indeed was, in that miserable affair, but not profligate or treacherous. It may be that I had no intentions either one way or the other, in connexion with a subject which I ought to have regarded in a more serious light, and that I thought far too little of the consequences of what I was doing, in which respect I grievously erred, I confess; but as for dishonourable views towards a person who had so implicitly trusted me, and pretended to esteem me so highly, such a shameful feeling never crossed my mind for an instant."

"I believe you, Philip—I do, indeed!" murmured Florence, "yet, pardon me, if I make one remark apparently savouring of doubt: is it not an almost

incredible supposition, that she who told me this should have wilfully criminated herself? Can you wonder that, for a time, I took for granted that what she said must be true, otherwise she would have died rather than cast such an imputation upon her own honour?"

Darcy smiled bitterly. "It must seem incredible to you, as an English maiden," he replied, "but as Sterne says, they manage things better on the continent. Thousands of very decent and well-conducted people abroad would be far more hurried away by interest in the romantic story, than shocked at its termination, and Pauline has made an involuntary master-move, of the full force of which she understands nothing, from mere theatrical observance of the dramatic proprieties. Her tragedy was incomplete without the catastrophe! Would you have had her spoil it all by such an omission?" and the mocking, hollow laugh of the poor fellow rang through the room, like the unnatural merriment of the prison. Florence shuddered, but made no answer.

"Had he not better retire now?" whispered Mr. Montgomery, to the physician. In the place of replying, the latter stepped lightly behind the chair of the invalid, and putting his hand on her temples, beckoned his friend to join him.

"She is better and calmer than I could have hoped," said he; "the experiment is working well. If they can but slip gradually into less exciting topics, which they will soon do if we leave them to themselves, all will go off excellently, and she will sleep as peacefully as a child. I have already given Darcy his instructions, and if he acts cleverly up to them, the success of my schemes is perfectly secure."

As he had prophesied, so ere long it happened; the over-strained mind, relieved of its terrible load,

began to yield to the wooings of "Nature's soft nurse," her answers to Phil's inquiries after her health, her happiness, and pursuits since they last parted, became languid and faint, while Phil, warned by a glance from Dr. Seaton, played his part to admiration, until, with a tranquil smile upon her face, and her hand clasped in that of him she so fondly loved, with all the pure devotion of a high-principled but warm-hearted maiden, Florence Montgomery fell asleep, with a calm and regular breathing, which raised the brightest expectations of her change for the better upon waking.

The good Doctor, his occupation for the present gone, slipped softly away, and for nearly two hours that strangely grouped quartet preserved an almost motionless silence; the grateful father, seated at the table, returning thanks, none the less hearty for not passing the portal of his lips, to the Disposer of events, who had given him back his beloved daughter from the very threshold of the grave; the young lovers, one slumbering so peacefully in her chair, the other watching her so attentively yet so noiselessly, and Menie in her corner, still buried in the heavy insensibility of fatigue and sorrow, but ere long to awaken to such joyful intelligence.

But wearily had those hours, fraught with so much happiness and relief to them, passed to the restless and anxious spirit of the affectionate Leila, who counted the moments until the return of Darcy with a feverish excitement and impatient chiding of the lagging hands of the clock, such as might be anticipated from her natural disposition. She tried to read, but the letters on the page danced before her eyes like so many marsh candles; she walked about the room like a caged tigress, as if she hoped to keep down her suspense by bodily exertion; she opened

the window fifty times, to hear the sound of the wheels as soon as possible, and even sallied out to the avenue gate to listen for the much wished for arrival, but with no success; in fact, she worked herself up in every conceivable way which was most conducive to her discomfort. One expedient to pass the time she did not resort to, which might have appeared a very natural one, viz., talking to Marcellus, for what reason I cannot say, but so it was, for his only attempt to draw her into conversation was met with an abrupt rudeness which he had never before witnessed in her, and she shunned his society all the evening, as though his every word conveyed a profanation.

At last the joyful sound of approaching wheels was heard, and she raced out into the court yard like a whirlwind, received from Darcy the cheering intelligence of the happy change, popped her head in at the drawing-room door, exclaiming—"Florence is much better! How stupid you have been all night, Marcellus! an owl is quite cheerful company to you!" tore upstairs without even waiting for a candle, threw herself upon her bed, and cried herself to sleep with pure joy. So ended the eventful Sunday.

CHAPTER V.

A WISE MAN FROM GOTHAM FISHES FOR A COMPLIMENT AND
CATCHES TRUTH.

THE next morning Marcellus Aurantius, having accompanied his friend Darcy as far as the gate of Mrs. Burton's cottage, at which the latter had occasion to make a call upon business of which we shall soon hear further particulars, prolonged his ride to the Castle, to pay a visit to the Earl, in pursuance of his promise to Walter the scapegrace. His card readily obtained him admittance, for his name was not entirely unknown to Lord Trimmington, and the noble Augustus, who was at that time on a short stay with his father, had also certain reasons of his own for being favourable to the reception of the Count of ——. The fact was that this promising statesman had realized all his fondest hopes of purity of election by being returned for a government borough, out of which the previous member had been driven into the deserts of the Chiltern Hundreds by some lofty and high-principled means unknown to my azure understanding, but perfectly comprehended by the sages of Yellow land; and being once more a Member of Parliament was anxious to catch hold of so distinguished a foreigner as Marcellus, in the hope of extracting from him some political information, which he might in an honourable and confidential manner publish to the world and his wife through an oration from the Treasury benches; so to his father's inquiry, "Shall we admit the visitor, Augustus?" he responded with all the fervour used by a deceased Prince in answer to the clergyman's appeal

"Let us pray," "With all my heart!" So while the servant was announcing to our gallant friend his lordship's willingness to grant him an audience, Augustus busied himself in putting his intended questions in battle-array, with a stern determination to let the young soldier feel with what a mind he had to deal.

Marcellus opened the subject upon which he had called in a manner so complimentary to the character of the good Earl, as regarded his amiability and love for his children, and so cleverly avoided explaining how his interest in Walter had been first excited, that he contrived to introduce the wish of his new *protégée* to enter the Imperial service, and his own inclination to assist him in the attainment of that object, without even touching upon the singularity of his choice in desiring to bear arms under a foreign prince rather than his own, to say nothing of the novelty of his selection of a patron in a perfect stranger, unknown heretofore both to himself and his relations; and found himself, rather to his own amazement, discussing the future destiny of Walter Tomnoddy as unconstrainedly as if he had known him all his life, and was the very person who might the most reasonably have been expected to undertake his *début* into the world.

He experienced moreover a far fainter opposition to his scheme than he had at all expected, taking for granted as he had done that the Earl would be desirous of providing for his son in his own country, and being ignorant of the extremes into which a weak mind may be driven by political and religious fanaticism, when played upon so unceasingly as his had been by Mr. McKenzie on the one side and Augustus on the other; in fact, the eligibility of getting rid of poor scapegrace Walter in any decent manner appeared to be perfectly beyond all question to everybody concerned. Strange in

good truth was it to Marcellus, who knowing English crotchets and prejudices pretty well for a foreigner, had never come in contact with this peculiar phase of national eccentricity, and had no conception of a yawning gulf between religion and morality, or that a great scoundrel could be a pattern of holiness any more than he comprehended a superficial, lying charlatan being a great statesman ; strange indeed, I repeat, was it to such a man, to observe that the Earl had already forgotten and forgiven all the disgrace Augustus had brought upon his name, and had evidently reinstated him in his former position in his admiration, and yet that he could prose and moralize as if a father's feelings were unknown to him, over the petty follies, the headstrong wilfulness, and boyish impertinences of a high spirited young fellow, who appeared in the warrior eyes of the Hungarian to give such splendid promise of becoming in reality a son in whom an aged father might well be content to centre all his pride ; and no less strange did it appear to him that a man of rank and influence, combined with a high character, should be the mere puppet of a rascal crew of charlatans of every description, bowing himself to them with the docility of a child, living upon their rank breath as though it were the blessed air of heaven, and having no desire beyond their favour, or fear more withering than that of forfeiting their patronage or incurring their displeasure.

Nor was this wonderment entirely confined to his meditations, for he was at last roused by a remark from the sage Augustus into a pretty open confession of his own political creed, and afforded that eminent statesman as fair an opportunity of gauging the esteem in which he and his colleagues were held in certain quarters as he could possibly have desired, although it unfortunately happened that the knowledge attained was

hardly complimentary enough to be used, and was far better adapted to the maiden speech of his Blue rival than his own grandiloquent effusions of self-laudation.

"You say, Mr. Tomnoddy," remarked Marcellus, "that you think it advisable to get your brother out of the way in any creditable manner, because he is so much behind the age in which he lives, and more especially the advanced opinions of yourself and your party, and because he has no soul for the liberalizing tendencies of your house. You tell me that he is deficient in respect and veneration, not so much to your father himself, which I readily allow would be very bad, but towards certain religious and political luminaries of whom I have never heard or read, and so I almost fancy cannot be such distinguished men, that it is either idiocy or blasphemy in a mere boy to be a little indifferent to their merits. Now, I would ask you honestly how you reconcile all this with your opinions? We of the empire are reviled and scoffed at by all your party as weak-minded bigots, or narrow-souled tyrants, and for what? because both in religion and political economy we believe in certain great authorities, and do not attach any high importance to what we consider the crude and ill-digested theories of common men. We bow our own faith a good deal I allow to the doctrinal precepts of a church, which, as we imagine, is likely to understand something about the affairs on which it has lavished so much research for many centuries, and we also compulsorily bow the opinions of the mass to our own upon certain topics, where we consider the people to be incompetent judges. But what else are you doing, Mr. Tomnoddy, in the very circumstances which have been the cause of my visit, but carrying out the same principle to a much greater extent? You cut off the ties of relationship between yourself and your boy-brother because he does not fall down and

worship a man of very ordinary attainments and knowledge, as I have a right to infer from his never having distinguished himself in a country whose boast it is that brilliant merit must push its way, and this, too, despite of the advantages accruing from the friendship of so powerful a member of the ministerial party as your excellent father. You coldly say that your brother must be of a low and unenlightened mind, because he does not agree with you, and yet you profess to cherish freedom of opinion as the greatest of all blessings. All this I cannot comprehend, and I am sure that the bulk of my nation and class are just as puzzled to understand the prevailing politics of your government as I am to fathom your domestic administration. You inveigh against the imperial cabinet because you very mistakenly imagine that it can 'lavish no favours on non-catholics, and that it sees no merit except in the orthodox, and yet this poor boy is in disgrace because, in carrying out your own principles, he indignantly protests against a most disgraceful attack on a lady who is universally acknowledged as a pattern of every gentle and Christian virtue which can adorn a woman. And when did the priesthood of the Romish communion, even in unhappy Ireland, ever more seditiously stir up the people by every malicious falsehood and brutish prejudice against the rebellious enemies of the Catholic church than has your saintly friend against Philip Darcy? By my word as a soldier and a gentleman! well may my countrymen say that the old sneer 'there are two natures, human nature and French nature,' may now be transferred to many of you English."

"You are pleased to be witty at the expense of my country," said Augustus, with a sickly smile, "but I had fancied that you were an enthusiastic admirer of England, from what I heard of you from my cousin,

Lady Mawkish, the last time you were in London. To what unfortunate cause am I to attribute this extraordinary diminution of respect for my native country?"

"Pardon me, Mr. Tomnoddy," replied Marcellus, coldly, "I have the greatest possible esteem for your countrymen as a body, and for the constitution of which, while you profess to be so proud of it, you are evidently so distrustful, as to be unceasingly desiring to alter it; but the fact is, that I love old England a great deal better than new, and am decidedly of opinion that most of your new-fangled policies are not much to the credit of your national wisdom. For England, under a strong and unfettered ministry, I have a respect almost amounting to veneration, but when Britannia allows herself to be drugged and played tricks with by any quack who chooses to try the experiment, I defer my reverence, as a matter of course, to her more lucid intervals, and look upon her during her mental aberrations, as a man naturally does look on the lamentable weakness of a noble nature temporarily exposed to some unhappy mania."

"I think you must have forgotten, or be unaware of the fact, that I myself am one of the ministerial party against whom you speak so bitterly," said Augustus, snappishly, "or the smooth-speaking of your nation is much exaggerated."

"Nay," answered the Hungarian, carelessly, "you opened the question yourself, and it is no fault of mine if you dislike my comments. You pronounced a glowing eulogium on your own government, which demanded a straightforward reply from me; and had I remained silent, you would have had a right to complain if you afterwards discovered that I had left you in error as to the general opinion of my nation upon your policy. If I have been led away by my sudden interest in your brother into speaking rudely concerning your manage-

ment of him, I beg to apologise, and to assure you, that I had originally no intention of meddling in your private affairs, but it really seemed so emblematical of the whole subject, that I was imperceptibly betrayed into the discourtesy of which I was guilty, and for which once more I request your pardon."

"Don't mention it," quoth Augustus, in a pompous voice, "I like men to speak their minds fairly and openly; but permit me to say, that the respect which we desire to inculcate in Walter is not that for an individual, however distinguished, but for public opinion, which with us is supreme; and what among your compatriots is treason, if uttered against a sovereign, is in our opinion the same when questioning the authority of the people."

The Hungarian laughingly shook his head, as he continued a conversation which had so whimsically changed from its original subject. "I see very plainly," said he, "that you and I shall never argue upon grounds sufficiently similar to admit of our understanding one another. To me it is just as incomprehensible, how any man, jealous in the highest degree of any interference on the part of a sovereign, or a cabinet well skilled in the science of government, can meekly, and almost slavishly, cringe to an unlettered and prejudiced mob, who cannot be expected to enter into the exigencies of the public service any more than to evince proficiency in mathematics, or any other branch of knowledge, which they never had time or opportunity to learn, as the exact contrary appears to you. But as I before said, you submitted to me a straightforward inquiry regarding my opinion, and that of my countrymen, upon the diplomacy of your party, and I have answered you fairly and candidly. Am I to blame if you are not pleased with the verdict?"

"Was England ever more dreaded, since she became a nation?" spouted Augustus, waving his arm with an action so absurdly like the reaping movement with which the countrymen of Marcellus are wont to use their swords with the greatest facility, that he instinctively raised his arm to parry the blow; "when, I say, was our nation more dreaded by any foreign government?"

"In one sense, perhaps never," retorted his exasperated antagonist, whose blood was rising at this insolent speech, and who was quite out of patience with the bombastic clap-trap of the placeman; "in the sense in which men are said to fear the plague, or murrain, or the power of slander, or any other scourge against which they see no sufficient protection, you and yours have raised your country to an unenviable pinnacle of notoriety, I will confess; for what is more terrible than the strength of the giant united to the mischievous ravings of the lunatic? But if you mean, when was the voice of England more regarded, when was she more respected, and when was her alliance more courted, then I unhesitatingly reply, when was it ever less? If you imagine that any court cares one farthing for a nominal friendship with a body of men who keep no faith with any one, who throw the torch of insurrection into the home of their oldest and firmest ally, who intrigue with the lowest and vilest in every nation, and even then desert their deluded dupes in the hour of need, you greatly err, and that you will learn bitterly enough before you have lived out your seventy years of experience. And do not assign this opinion to national dislike, for nothing can be further from the truth. In their individual capacity your countrymen are held in the highest honour in the empire. English good faith and honesty; English courage, untarnished by ferocity, and coupled with almost

feminine gentleness in the domestic relations of life; English morality, are all proverbial amongst us; nor do we scruple to rank your untitled gentry among our noblesse; but that this favourable judgment is diametrically opposite to our opinion of your government, I am compelled to allow, for of that no disapproval can be more marked, as to its treachery, meanness, and falsehood."

"We consider it no such great recommendation for a statesman to be too fond of foreigners," responded Augustus, sententiously; "and as for our encouraging the revolutionary party on several occasions, we esteem it good policy to find other nations something to do, without meddling with us; besides which, we sympathise with the friends of freedom and advancement, and are the enemies of all oppression and retrograde movements. The interests of England, my dear sir, are of an isolated nature, and lines of conduct expedient for the development of our national resources, may not be equally applicable to other governments."

"You appear to have deliberately adopted, and openly avowed as your grand moving principle, a sentiment which your bitterest foe attributed to you years ago, and which the allies of England indignantly scouted as a gross calumny," answered Marcellus, "viz., that the natural position for Great Britain is to make herself a mere hornet's nest to annoy other nations; but upon this I will not linger, as I feel sure that the good sense of your countrymen must be against you there. To pass on to another portion of your remark, I have no objection to concede that an unpatriotic devotion to foreign interests is an offence in the eyes of all thinking men, nor do I blame you in the least for looking first to the benefits to be obtained for your own country. But is it conducive to sound

policy, even of the most selfish kind, to be so recklessly unfaithful to all your professions of good-will and alliance that no one can trust you in any way, or repose the slightest confidence in the sincerity of your promises?

“Your adversaries, the adherents of Lord Knowsley, might be, and probably would be, as hostile to us, did occasion demand, as you have been, and might renounce our alliance to court that of our enemy, but it would at least be openly and honestly done: while we were foes we should act as such; when we made peace we should keep it; when we pretended to be allies we should be so in reality; and, consequently, there would be some object in showing a moderate desire to retain the friendship of a country like England, which at present we have not, inasmuch as your alliance is a mere name, and is no bar to underhand acts of fierce hostility. Hence it is, that we so prodigiously prefer to see your rivals in office, not because they are more favorable to our policy, but because they are more honest and frank when they have cause of complaint, and incomparably more trustworthy when they express good-will. Mark my words, Mr. Tomnoddy, a day will very speedily arrive, when some usurper or aggressor (I do not pretend to say from what quarter the danger will arise, but of the fact I feel convinced) will presume so far upon the apathy or dishonesty of your government, as to lay violent hands upon the coveted spoil in defiance of all your remonstrances, and you will find yourselves plunged into a war, caused, not by any undervaluing of your warlike resources if fairly used, but by the plausible hope that such statesmen as you delight to honour can be bribed or terrified into anything. I do not mean by ‘bribery’ a direct appeal to the private purses of the ministers, for of that I acquit the most factious and place-

hunting of them all, but a covert invitation to a snug piece of roguery, for a share in the spoil in the shape of increase of territories, or commercial advantages ; and in the whirlwind of indignation which will follow the discovery that such has been the case, may the saints shield you !” A furtive smile lighted up the features of the experienced Augustus, who knew the gullibility of his dear friend, John Bull, better than Marcellus, and was well aware of the ease with which all the political sins of the whole nation may be shifted upon the shoulders of the poor Blues, who perform in Parliament the same part as “ that brute of a cat ” in a boarding-house, being charged with every clumsiness which is committed by the awkward and thievish maid of all work.

"As to your love of advancement and the march of civilization," continued Marcellus, "take the word of a man who knows his own country, that you never made a grosser mistake than when you fancied you were promoting those objects by your patronage of your friends of the last few years ; for anything less like the politics of sober, practical England than their theories, no one could have devised. I am a Hungarian myself, heart and soul ! for the gallant old country I could lay down my life with cheerfulness, and to ensure her welfare I should be perfectly content to spend my whole existence in toil or privation ; but I can clearly perceive that it is by upholding order such as I find at present, and establishing the only rule that can stand, as things now are, between the people and the direst misrule, I can best serve her, and therefore it is that I am what I am ; a terrible traitor, I fear, in your eyes to the holy cause, but none the less for that the natural leader by birth and principle of the real friends of my native land. But I am growing wearisome ! Have I your permission, and that of your


father, for interesting myself in obtaining for your brother the military employment he desires?"

Augustus lost no time in assuring his visitor of the perfect willingness of his father to export Walter for foreign consumption, being glad, perhaps, of a good excuse to change the subject, and after a desultory conversation, maintained for the most part by Marcellus, from a courteous wish to end his mission in a more complimentary manner than had lately threatened to be the case, he took his leave, amidst a profusion of clap-trap from his antagonist, and returned to the Priory in search of Leila, in company with whom he set off to the Hall, to assist in a committee of taste upon hanging the pictures.

Was the gallant Count beginning to fall in love with a little kitten of a girl, about tall enough to look into a tankard without standing on a stool, as full of tricks as a monkey, and barely past actual childhood in point of age! I sincerely hope not, for the credit of his sanity! and I really think he was as far from intending such madness as any of my wise and prudent readers; but he certainly was coming round very fast to Jem Farren's opinion of her as a pet animal, viz., that she was prettier and more entertaining than any spaniel or Skye terrier; nor do I deny that he took more interest in her droll, eccentric conversation than he would have done in the improving lectures of his grandmother, had that venerable female been then alive. Touching which silly prejudice on his part I must make thus much excuse for him, that he was not entirely alone in his folly. If any of you, dear friends, have ever had a live doll, or been one yourself, you will scarcely be very hard, I think, upon Marcellus; if you have not—why then you know nothing at all about the matter, and in common decency ought to

veil your inexperience in a modest silence, bearing
duly in mind the wholesome doctrine enunciated in
the old song,

“‘Tis a pity when charming women
Talk of things that they don't understand.”



CHAPTER VI.

DARCY UNDERTAKES TO "BELL THE CAT."

WHILE Marcellus had thus usefully been beguiling the morning by casting the pearls of sound advice before the swine of Yellow diplomacy, and subsequently taking the taste of that disagreeable medicine concocting out of his mouth by a gentle interchange of merry absurdities with his dark-haired playfellow, Phil was carrying on with Mrs. Burton a conversation of no little moment to that lady's interests, and had suggested to her a more than barely possible hope, that some of the consequences of her deceased husband's recklessness and folly in all things connected with business, might yet be retrieved and a portion, at least, of the spoils of the ungodly rescued from their jaws. For although he was sufficiently well acquainted with the natural history of that interesting domestic quadruped the dog, to be perfectly aware of the hopelessness of undertaking to recover butter out of the mouth of a canine plunderer, yet he also knew that you may every now and then induce him to drop the bone already in his mouth, in order to snatch at another, and by so doing rob him of a booty already in his possession. And arguing upon these premises, he ventured to entertain very sanguine hopes of persuading Mr. Sawdry to enter into certain arrangements with Mrs. Burton of an extremely advantageous nature to the latter; not so much by any appeal to the honour or liberality of that gentleman, whose right hand would never have

known the good deeds of the left, even though an unparalleled amount of confidence had existed between the two, as by the far more practical policy of convincing him, that it was not his interest to refuse what was demanded of him, lest in stealing the widow's mite he should happen to lose a lucrative business in other directions. And in what way Phil arrived at this conclusion, it shall now be our object to learn from the conversation which took place between him and Mrs. Burton in the cottage garden, where she was at work when he arrived.

"So the facts are as I imagined, and the suspicions aroused by Charlie's hints have not led me far wrong," said he, in answer to a somewhat lengthy explanation of her circumstances, which he had just received from the lady he addressed, "and that a very important portion of the obligations which press upon your income is attributable to the extortions of a man who, having ruined your husband and robbed your children of their inheritance, must needs add to his harpy-cruelties the exaction of a large annual sum from you, to which he is not entitled by law, and which he has no means of enforcing, if you resist."

"I believe it is as you say, Mr. Darcy," returned Mrs. Burton, "though I was not aware of the exact state of the case until you informed me; but even if this person has no claim upon me which can be sustained in a court of law, do you not think that as a matter of honour I am bound to continue payments, in consideration of which alone my husband was spared the degradation of a prison or of insolvency, by those who had nothing more to do than merely to allow things to take their course to ensure that evil falling upon him?"

"I assure you honestly, my dear madam," replied Phil, "that I think you quite as free in honour as in law to refuse paying any more black mail to these

brigands of civilized life, for they are really nothing better; and if you will listen to me for a minute or two, while I lay the case before you, as it appears to eyes not blind, as I would hope, to the path of strict integrity, but on the other hand not as sensitive as yours to a mistaken idea of self-sacrifice to the mere letter of a promise, granted under the influence of a cruel distortion of facts, and which would never have been given had you been better informed of the real state of affairs, I think that I shall be able to bring you round to my opinion, and to convince you that it would be a great injustice to your children to encourage these harpies by weak concessions. Your resources are amply sufficient to secure the comfort and prosperity in life of your family, if they were unimpaired; but they are unhappily quite inadequate to bear the exhaustion of supporting your station, and advancing the interests of your son and daughter, while crippled with the exertion of carrying out in a Quixotically chivalrous spirit the agreement into which you have been so treacherously entrapped. Will you pardon the liberty I take in thus intruding upon you my advice, which I have done with the best intentions?"

The lady bowed in acknowledgment of her willingness to hear his counsels, and seating herself upon a garden chair, which was Menie's favourite post for pursuing her out-door sketches, expressed her desire to pay every respect to the opinion of so staunch a friend to her family as Mr. Darcy had proved himself to be on several occasions, although she still felt disposed to doubt whether it would be possible to shake her determination.

"You see, then," commenced Darcy, "that the kind-hearted but unbusinesslike gentleman of whose affairs we have now to speak, fell most undeniably

into exceedingly bad hands, all the worse perhaps for the plausibility and mockery of good feeling evinced towards him at the very time that he was being so mercilessly plundered. It appears that he spent, and borrowed money upon, all and everything upon which he could lay his hands, and that after he had made away with the whole of his property of which he could legally dispose, he was induced to attempt to raise a further sum by means of gaining your consent to the surrender of your settlement, which, however, proved to be absolutely impracticable, owing to the pains your father had taken to prevent this very disaster. It would appear, moreover, that you were persuaded by a friend of the family to refuse to permit any kind of illicit trafficking with your property, acting upon the very proper position that you had a duty to your children, as well as to your husband; and that in consequence of this refusal the negotiations which had already been commenced between Mr. Burton and a man of the name of Cartwright fell to the ground. A little time after this, however, your husband as I am informed, came to you in great distress, and confided to you, that, driven almost to madness by his difficulties, he had obtained a sum of money by a false representation of the state of his property, in fact, by giving security upon your settlement, and that if he were detected in the fraud the consequences might be of a very serious nature. You then agreed to an arrangement made from professed goodnature and consideration for your circumstances by a Mr. Amos Sawdry, brother to the political jackal of the Earl of Trimmington, who permitted himself to be made the agent of a compromise with the lender of the money, whereby you covenanted to pay a certain sum every year, should you survive your husband, in consideration of his being unmolested during his life. This

agreement has been so illegally drawn up that it is null and void, in fact, it never could have been intended to serve any other purpose than merely to act as an excuse to draw money from you so long as you could be induced by fair means to pay it, and could never have been meant for a formal document. Have I not stated the case pretty correctly?"

"You certainly have," replied Mrs. Burton, "but you have not yet said a word against my obligation in honour to keep my engagement. I made the promise to shield my husband from shame and punishment, and I must abide by it."

"Yet one moment more," said Darcy, "and my case will be fully laid before you. It is so abundantly evident that no man of business would have advanced a farthing in this careless manner, that it strikes any one, in the slightest degree acquainted with the proceedings of these vagabonds, that the deception which your husband is said to have practised could never have succeeded in obtaining a loan from such persons, and that we must look for the object of telling this story in a yet deeper laid scheme. It struck me immediately upon hearing this part of the case, that in all probability both the attempt to impose on the lender, and the threat to expose the fraud were portions of the same plan to force you into pledging yourself to the payment of this annual sum, and that Mr. Burton (I am deeply grieved to be compelled to hazard such an opinion) was weak enough to allow himself to be bullied into sharing this cruel deception upon the affection of a dutiful wife."

"I do not perfectly understand your meaning, Mr. Darcy," interrupted the lady.

"What I mean is this," resumed Phil; "I greatly fear that, finding from Mr. Sawdry that there was little hope of obtaining any more mercy from his

creditors, unless he could invent means of still answering to the ceaseless demands on his purse, he wrote the letter, containing the false statement of his power to part with the settlement, at the dictation of the usurer to whom he was indebted, wholly and solely for the purpose of showing it to you, to work upon your feelings of pity for his distress, and your fears for his safety; trusting to your ignorance of business and laudable desire to save him at all risks from shame. As for the supposition that he *bonâ fide* obtained money from a professional usurer, upon the strength of his bare statement in a letter that he could part with the settlement, without any inquiries being made into the correctness of his assertion, that is entirely beyond the limits of my credulity, nor could any amount of evidence from the whole collected fraternity of money-lenders induce me to give an instant's belief to such a ridiculous story. Now what these pillagers pretend to say is, that a certain sum was immediately advanced by a man named Cornwell, on the simple word of your husband, on whom you must bear in mind he had previously heaped every insulting declaration of his bad faith which he could think of, and that it was not until after the necessary steps had been commenced for completing the transfer of the settlement that the discovery of its impossibility was made. That you could believe this is proved by your actions, but pardon me, if I cast the indirect slur upon your discrimination of announcing that it would never have been entertained as even possible by me. I would fain hope that there was some mistake on Mr. Burton's part in that unhappy letter, and that he did not originally intend to be forced into sharing a scheme to injure his own wife, and upon that painful subject we need have no discussion, but may take for granted that some oppressive influence which we

cannot trace to its source was brought into play on the occasion, so as to free him personally from the most shameful portion of the blame; but of the main point of my assertion, viz., that Cornwell—if such a man really exist, which is very doubtful—never advanced a shilling upon the pretended assignment of your property, and never ran any risk of doing so, I feel perfectly convinced. What I require of you at present is simply to give me permission to act for you, and commission me to refuse in your name to pay any more hush-money, unless it can be more satisfactorily proved that the claim is founded upon some justice, and that you have not been deceived into pinching yourself to save him, whose honour was as dear to you as your own, from consequences which could in no case have really fallen upon him. In fact, I wish you to empower me to announce, as your deputy, that unless it can be clearly shown that Mr. Burton received money upon the statement of his regarding your settlement, and so rendered it imperatively necessary to refund that which he obtained under false pretences, you will have no more dealings with these people except through your attorney."

"But think of the honour of him who is gone, Mr. Darcy," said the poor lady bursting into tears; "supposing that we succeeded in resisting this claim, but at the sacrifice of exposing his weakness, could I ever entirely forgive myself?"

"Of that I entertain no fear at all," replied Darcy "I am so convinced that it is all a paltry trick, in which no man of business would like to expose his share, that I have no doubt, if I can once establish my position, that the thing will be done as quietly as you could desire. If I cannot manage this, I will promise to do nothing to compromise you in any way, and unless you give your consent to still refusing the

payment, I shall feel it my duty to give way to your wishes, and withdraw my opposition to the present arrangement. But think of your children, as well as of your husband, and consider how cruelly unjust towards them is this overstrained nervousness about exposing the weakness of another. Remember what a son Charlie has been to you—how he changed his very nature, and cheerfully bowed himself to a mode of life he abhorred, that he might be the stay and the pride of his widowed mother, and how he has toiled his way to fame and honour and, what his gallant heart cherishes more still, independence and the ability to aid his family. Many a man has been made the subject of the song of the bard, or the eulogy of the historian, whose heroism was not comparable to his, and the pureness of his motives renders his unflinching courage all the more worthy of admiration. It is not such a mighty matter to fall in battle, though we naturally make much of it, that I know from experience, for I have myself seen some of the most desperate service as regards individual danger that any man could well have witnessed, and have held my life as worth very few hours' purchase for many a week. But I had the romance and excitement of the affair to sustain me, and my principal anxiety was merely to meet my death as a Darcy and a gentleman. In all that there was nothing to depress the mind; but how different was the toilsome, weary struggle of your dutiful son: immersed from morning till night in uncongenial studies, mixing in the society of dull, plodding candidates for those honours which they valued only for the money they would fetch, and debarred from all that really interested him, he would have deserved pity rather than blame had his resolution failed him; but the happy prospect of cheering his mother's declining years kept him steadfast to his object, and

he has gloriously triumphed. Will you even now cut off his hopes of distinction at the bar, and doom him to the obscurity of a village parsonage, that he may still have a home for his sister, without trespassing upon your resources? That would indeed be visiting the sins of the parent upon the children. And surely some respect is due to your own father, who, in yielding to your prayers to be permitted to wed him you loved, took such careful pains to shield you from the troubles which he foresaw that you were bringing upon yourself. Was there not a kind of tacit agreement between you, that you would do nothing to frustrate his wise precautions, and to rob your children of the advantages his prudence had secured for them? Would he have consented, had you told him fairly and openly before you married, that all you could do to render useless all his paternal anxiety, and to nullify his affectionate foresight regarding you and your children, would be ruthlessly carried out?"

"It is enough, Mr. Darcy," replied the lady, averting her head to hide her emotion, but holding out her hand; "I will not forget that I am a mother now as well as a widow, and that I was, as you remind me, the daughter of the kindest of fathers. In your hands I repose my cause with implicit confidence, but be very careful, I implore you, as far as circumstances will permit, of the fair fame of the poor departed, who, had he been treated by others as his kind heart led him to treat them, would have fared very differently."

"Most assuredly, my dear lady," answered he, "nothing can be more remote from my intention than to outrage your feelings by casting any cruel reflections upon Mr. Burton. But what can bring Menie home at this rapid pace? I fear some accident must have happened—perhaps Florence may have experienced an

unexpected relapse," and he turned pale at the terrible thought.

In good truth the child did appear to be in a great flurry, and had evidently galloped home as fast as her nimble little feet could carry her ; but her face bore an expression of anger rather than grief, and Darcy was amazed to see on that usually gentle countenance the unmistakeable tokens of a proud and haughty spirit, which in a man, and in rougher days, might have almost degenerated into fierceness under strong provocation, as she announced her errand in the laconic sentence—"Your mother has come to the Hall, and I have left it ! Five minutes is quite long enough for us both to be there together !"

"My mother has come to the Hall !" exclaimed Darcy in astonishment ; "what on earth can have made her change her mind so suddenly ? Who has she brought with her, for there is nothing ready to receive visitors ?"

"She has brought your sister, a foreigner with immense black whiskers, a ladies' maid, and a macaw !" said Menie, still rather furiously.

"Has she been rude to you then, my pretty Menie ?" asked Phil, in a soothing tone ; "you must not think anything of it ; she means no harm, I am sure, it is only her manner—I will soon set it all straight. Now tell me all about it."

"She was not so much rough as impertinent," cried Menie, with flashing eyes ; "she was absolutely impudent ! If she had not been your mother I should have thought....."

"What ?" inquired Darcy, while her mother vainly endeavoured to stem the torrent of proud indignation bursting from her daughter, usually so obedient to her lightest word.

"I should have fancied that Colonel Darcy had

married his cook!" continued the child, in a firm, slow voice, as if determined to show that she deliberately meant what she was saying.

"For shame, Marion!" said her mother; "how can you be such a wicked, ungrateful girl towards your brother's kind friend, as to speak in such a way!"

Poor, tender-hearted Menie burst into tears, and, all the remembrance of her wrongs entirely swallowed up in contrition for her present offence against Phil, seemed almost heart-broken with a sense of her ill-behaviour, nor could all his attempts to restore her to cheerfulness avail for a considerable time, though he spared no trouble to reassure her of his perfect goodwill towards her; but at length he succeeded in winning her over to complete her tale of the arrival, and thus by degrees to coax her back into her former equanimity.

"I was at the Hall with Leila," commenced she, "looking over the pictures, and settling in my own mind which I should select next to copy, as you had been kind enough to leave the choice to me, when we heard a carriage roll up to the gates of the court yard, which were half open at the time, followed by a great bustle and confusion, as though some very unexpected visitors had arrived, who were under the impression that everything had been prepared for their reception, and were much disappointed that such was not the case. I rushed out in a frantic hurry as usual, and outstripped Leila, who had stopped to pick up her hat, so I made my appearance at the side gate of the garden by myself, and almost ran over a party who were coming in that way.

" 'Here, little girl!' said the foremost lady, whom I afterwards discovered to be your mother, 'come here—I want to speak to you. Are you the child Philip was telling me about in his last letter? he says you

would like to come and live with us as a sort of humble companion for Julia, but I don't think you look much like the sort of girl I should choose. I don't approve of the way you dress, and that ridiculous hat—I am afraid you would be giving yourself airs.'

"I turned away without speaking, for I felt very angry indeed, and yet I did not wish to say anything impertinent, but she quickened her pace and took me by the arm.

" 'Do you hear me, child !' she said ; 'this is not the way to obtain a situation, I can assure you ; you must know your place better, if you come to live with me.'

" 'Would you be so kind as to let me go home ?' said I, as meekly as I could, for you have no idea, Philip, how furious I felt. 'There is some mistake I think, and I would much rather get back to the cottage at once.' But she did not unclasp her hand, but shook me quite roughly by my shoulders, and began again.

" 'Are you not little Burton, the child that Mr. Darcy took such an absurd fancy for ? You're going with us to Florence, you know, to wait upon my daughter, but you mustn't begin by being so obstinate. Come, run and help the people get the things out of the carriage. Stay, though, just wait a moment, my boot-lace is undone—you may tie it for a beginning, only make haste.'

" 'Let me tie it for you, Menie,' exclaimed a voice on the other side of the shrubs, 'I'll give the dear old lady a lesson in that art she won't forget in a hurry !' and to my great relief Leila now made her appearance, and taking off her hat with a comical bow, stood staring at the new comers with a mixture of defiance

and mischief on her face, at which I could not help laughing.

“ ‘ Who in the name of Zerneck are you ? ’ asked she, looking at Don Whiskerandos, who was gazing lackadaisically about him in great bewilderment ; ‘ there are not going to be any more concerts for a long time, and I don’t think we shall employ professional singers when there are ; we are very patriotic too, and should encourage the home trade even if we did require paid assistance, but I believe they are going to be all amateur performances next autumn. Dear me, Julia, so you are here too, and my dear god-mamma—what a nice meeting ! but if it is not inhospitable to ask the question, What have you come for ? ’

“ ‘ We have come to see Philip, and to stay with him for two or three months, as the fit takes us,’ said your mother, who appeared to me more than half afraid of Leila ; ‘ and that gentleman, whom you took for a singer, is the Prince di Capello, and a cherished friend of the family.’ Here she looked at your sister, who shrugged up her shoulders, and shook her head at Leila, as if she were not altogether of that opinion. By the by, I must not forget to say, that Miss Julia was very kind to me indeed, and kissed me, and bid me not to mind what her mamma had said, and promised to love me very much, and I think her such a nice girl, and exactly like you, Philip.”

Darcy laughed at her unvarnished compliment, and begged her to proceed with her history.

“ ‘ Oh, that’s an Italian prince, is it ? ’ said that impudent Leila, gravely walking round and round him, like gentlemen do when they buy a horse ; ‘ I’ve seen hundreds of them when we were abroad, and I don’t call this a good one by any means.’ So she began singing to herself a very impertinent little snatch of a

song, which she learnt from you I believe, and continued her investigation of the foreigner, until your mother got tired of waiting, and pushed on towards the house, Leila slowly falling back with her face towards them, as if doubting in her own mind whether they had any business to come in."

Phil was highly amused at the ridiculous scene, which he fully appreciated from his knowledge of the parties engaged, though he was naturally vexed at this awkward rencontre between his mother and his baby-wife, who detested her mother-in-law with as much bitterness as though the relationship had been real.

"Pray, Miss Menie," he inquired jestingly, "may I venture to ask what this mysterious ditty was, with which Leila thought fit to welcome the foreign visitor?"

"I really don't think I can possibly tell you that," replied she, "it was so extremely impertinent of her, but I am afraid that it was partially your fault for teaching her so many naughty songs!"

"I teach her rude songs!" said Phil, in a tone of virtuous indignation.

"Oh, yes! I have often heard you humming it about the garden lately; besides which Leila told me she had picked it up from you. But I can't tell you what it is, for I really was quite ashamed of her being so unkind to a stranger."

"Pooh! I'll give you the handsomest coop of bantams in all London, if I do not guess in three tries," replied Phil, "so here goes for my first attempt—

'Is that the King that I see there?
I saw a man at Bartlemy Fair
Looked more like a king than that chap there.'

That's one guess ! now let me try another, for I think I can find it out."

"Don't trouble yourself any further, Philip, for I have lost my bantams already," exclaimed Menie, merrily. "I declare the Sphynx is nothing to you ! But to conclude my story : your mother went into the house, and ordered me to go and look after the boxes, and to fetch her shawl, at which Leila fired up, and was very angry, though she continued, amidst all her madness, to introduce such absurd little speeches and jokes that I could not help laughing. Your mother bore this for some time with more patience than I expected ; but at last she got quite out of temper, and vented all her anger upon me, in terms of such cruel insult to our poverty, and the desire to live upon your bounty which she attributed to us, that I dared not trust myself any longer in her company, for fear of making some answer that I should never forgive myself for uttering to any one related to you ; and leaving Leila still in fierce battle with the invaders, ran home as fast as I could."

"I think I had better go and look after them myself, Menie," returned Darcy, "but I will come down during the afternoon or evening and tell you how all is going on. Do not vex your mother by entering into any unnecessary details of the unkind treatment you have received to-day, but simply inform her that you have quite satisfied me that you had experienced such great provocation, that I can easily forget and forgive your incautious and somewhat violent invective of this morning. Now tell me, before I start, did my sister seem to be well-disposed towards this whiskered foreigner, or was the admiration entirely confined to my mother ?"

"As far as I could judge from the little I saw, I

should say that she thought of him, after some acquaintance, much the same as Leila and I did at first sight," replied Menie, enigmatically; and in five minutes more Darcy was in his saddle and cantering swiftly back to the scene of action.



CHAPTER VII.

"MA CHERE MERE" ACCOMPLISHES A COUP D'ETAT.

THE scene which awaited Philip Darcy upon his arrival in the great hall of his new mansion, was whimsical enough to have afforded some valuable hints to the compiler of a farce, even if we may not go so far as to say that it would not have been wholly without merit as part of a Christmas pantomime.

The hall in which the belligerents were assembled was a room of magnificent dimensions, the oaken panels of which were carved in a most elaborate manner, so as to cause many of the visitors to almost regret the introduction of the arms and trophies of the chase with which they were now beginning to be covered, as hiding beauties they could willingly have seen more plainly displayed to the eye; while the richly-painted ceiling, and splendid mosaic pavement, inlaid with woods of various kinds, sufficiently betokened the disregard of cost, which must have impelled alike the builder and the restorer of such a princely chamber: a judgment by no means diminished by observing the renovation of the stained glass which was going on at the west end, which consisted almost entirely of one huge window, hitherto allowed to fall into terrible want of repair through the poverty of the late owner, but now assuming, under the hands of skilful workmen, its pristine brilliancy and beauty. But not a single article of furniture was to be seen, unless a long deal table used by the men engaged upon the window, or in hanging the armour, could be so called, and upon this

was piled a heterogeneous mass of cloaks, shawls, and small luggage, while in one corner the macaw kept loud and discordant watch over boxes and portmanteaus of every size and shape. The Hall not being yet inhabited, there were no servants about, except grooms and gardeners ; indeed the storm which was now raging, was principally raised by Mrs. Darcy's intense wrath at what she called this disgraceful and disrespectful negligence, and want of preparation for her arrival. Roused out of her usual affectation of listlessness, she was now in a good sound passion, and was haranguing the offending Leila in the tones and with somewhat of the expression and gestures of a tragedy-queen at a minor theatre ; while the damsel addressed, seated carelessly upon the table, was carrying on her share in the conference with a jeering complacency which might have incensed even Job himself.

Julia Darcy, an elegant, gentle-looking girl of seventeen, whose fair hair and blue eyes contrasted strongly, though hardly to the disadvantage of either beauty, with the raven tresses and Arab expression of the pretty termagant before her, was standing behind her mother, half inclined to cry at the disagreeable scene she was witnessing, half disposed to laugh at the absurdity of the whole affair, particularly when Mrs. Darcy replied with some grave, proverbial rebuke to the impertinent sallies of Leila's unbridled humour. The Prince stood sheepishly by, now staring vacantly at the ceiling or the walls, then looking into his hat with the air of a man puzzling out some extraordinary cipher contained in the maker's name and address, and ever and anon turning his gloves inside out in lieu of any more useful employment for his fingers. His knowledge of English was limited, which accounts for his not quite understanding Leila's eloquence, which somewhat resembled the mountain torrent in rapidity as well as

force ; but he plainly enough perceived that something had gone wrong, and that he himself was by no means held in such profound respect by this pert little stranger as by Mrs. Darcy ; added to which, her circumambulatory inspection of his princely person so disagreeably reminded him of certain operations performed by the Austrian police in olden days, as to cause an involuntary thrill of apprehension to run through his frame, safe as his common sense told him he was upon British ground. Last, but not least, either in point of stature or of importance in our tale, the handsome Hungarian sat upon the steps which had been used for hanging the armour, engaged in a game of romps with his young friend's new present, the Blenheim spaniel, and apparently deriving the most radiant satisfaction from the whole group ; but if one might judge from the furtive smile which lighted up his face whenever his eyes fell on the Italian Prince, experiencing the greatest delectation from something connected with him, of all the many joyous associations this preposterous scene conjured up before his mind's eye. Whenever Leila turned round indeed to silently demand his applause of her oratory, he never failed to telegraph back again his approbation in a most satisfactory manner ; and to Mrs. Darcy's brilliant flights of fancy and magnificent figures of speech, he was not utterly insensible, but still to the shame of his gallantry the great attraction continued to be the Prince, and he feasted his eyes on him with a ravenous delight, only to be equalled by the crawling toadyism of a Yellow enemy to all aristocracy. Not that the glance evinced any overwhelming admiration for the party so diligently watched, for such was not the case ; but judging from the analogy of the Yellow gentry before mentioned that goes for very little, as we have their own indisputable word for the fact that they are

not at all admirers of great people, while our own every-day experience abundantly proves how anxious they are to be informed of every movement and every word of the very men whom they profess to despise. So my verdict is still against Marcellus, as being a terrible tuft-hunter; and I entertain little doubt that his contemptuous smile was only assumed, and that he wished from the bottom of his heart that heaven had made him such a man as His Excellency the Prince di Capello.

Such was the group which greeted the eyes of Philip Darcy as he appeared in the hall, and hastened to bid his mother welcome to Midhampton, with as good a grace, and as much show of gratification at her visit as he could muster up, so shortly after having experienced such bitter annoyance from the account which Menie Burton had given him of her previous proceedings.

That noble lady received him with great hauteur, and an affectation of sorrowful indignation at his undutiful negligence in preparing for a visit which he was not in the least expecting, since she had never mentioned it to him during his late residence, but rather given him to understand that she was about to leave England for the whole year, in the course of a few days; though all his assurances that such was the case were now perfectly incapable of pacifying her ruffled spirit or restoring her to good humour. Julia, on the other hand, displayed the greatest delight at her brother's arrival, and it was evidently to be seen from their meeting that there was no shadow of disunion between her and Phil; for her joyous smile, as she bounded into his arms, was more that of an enthusiastic maiden advancing to meet the hero of her dreams upon his return from a victorious battle-field, than the welcome of the placid, well-drilled sister of fashionable life, into which her mother had exhausted

so much trouble in moulding her. Nor was his reception of her in the least degree less affectionate than her own, as he whispered a question in her ear, to which a mischievous smile and gay shake of her sunny ringlets appeared to be sufficient answer, without the necessity of a single word passing the rosy lips in reply.

Marcellus nodded to him with a look of comic bewilderment, but without ceasing from his self-imposed task of teaching the dog to sit upright with its paws by its side, or relaxing his strange investigation of the princely stranger; while the last-named magnate appeared more sheepish than ever, as though he foully suspected the new-comer to be, in point of friendly disposition towards himself, but a very slight improvement upon the dark-haired lassie who so narrowly inspected him a few minutes ago.

Leila had now abdicated her seat on the table, and announcing with mock ceremony that her husband had arrived at last, and would proceed to do the honours of his house in person, called to her dog, and proceeded to quit the hall; but finding that neither he nor Marcellus appeared disposed to follow, she changed her plan of action, out of consideration for one of them, though deponent stateth not which, and returned to the group of disputants, taking up her station behind Julia, but within comfortable reach of her dog and his tutor.

"I think it is high time that I came down here," said Mrs. Darcy, sternly, "to put an end to the reckless waste and extravagance that seems to be going on. I do not wonder, Philip, that my apartments are not ready, when I see how you have been frittering away both time and money in this shameless manner. However, as you know very well, you are of
now, and if the people of whom you have ordered

these things choose to proceed against you for their bills, you will have to go to prison, for I cannot consent to let you have such a large sum as would be required to pay for them. I have hitherto given you free access to my purse, and for appearance' sake have even permitted you to keep an account of your own at your banker's; but all this must come to an end at length."

Phil laughed good humouredly. "Oh! never mind business details to-day, mother," he said, "we will discuss them presently when we have a convenient opportunity; but what has brought you down so unexpectedly to Midhampton?"

"Unexpectedly indeed!" replied his mother, angrily; "what can you mean by using such an expression? I gave my orders in writing to that impudent fellow Owen, specifying the number of rooms to be furnished, and the kind of hangings I should require in the drawing-rooms, and everything I could think of, even to a rosewood stand for my macaw, and yet you talk about not expecting me. I did not forget you either, for I expressly said that you might have a pony of your own, and ordered a good airy room to be got ready for you in the attics, with a nice French bed and dimity curtains, all neat and quiet as boys ought to be kept."

"For mercy's sake, mother, don't let us enter into all these details," interrupted Phil, horrified at seeing her making such an exhibition of her absurdities before strangers; "I am very glad to see you, but it was no fault of mine that nothing was ready for your arrival, for I never heard of your intention of coming. I dare say Mr. Owen forgot to tell me, for he has such a mass of business to attend to for me just now, that I can easily imagine that this slipped his memory."

"He'll remember me better before long," answered

Mrs. Darcy, viciously, "for I have written to the Lord Chancellor to have him punished for his impudence, and neglect of the interests of his mistress, and I expect to hear by every post that he is to be struck off the rolls; though I think to be well horsewhipped, or ducked in the pond, would be a more appropriate punishment than striking him off his rolls, whatever that may be, which I don't pretend to understand, but I am told that is the only way of getting at a lawyer. So I asked the Chancellor to do anything to him that seemed most convenient, to himself I mean of course, not to Owen, because the more inconvenient it was to him the better."

"My dear mother," said Darcy, firmly, but without the least appearance of temper, "I have several times asked you why you have so unexpectedly come to visit me, despite of having expressly told me not three days ago, that it was not your intention to do so until next spring, even if you could find an opportunity of coming then, and the only answer I can obtain from you is a lecture upon the way in which I spend my own money; and threats, the utter futility of which you must know if you choose for one moment to think for yourself, of what you will do, or will not do, as regards the disposition of property, not one single shilling of which is in any manner at your control. I have given way for months, I might say years, to this incomprehensible whim of claiming my fortune as your own, and Heaven knows that from the boundless access you have had to it since I became of age, one might almost be excused for taking it for granted that your assertion was correct. But when you thus take me by surprise, introduce a perfect stranger into my house as an intimate friend, and in his presence renew your fabulous rights of proprietorship, it is no more than a duty to myself to declare once for all, that this must now be

brought to an end, and that it must be definitely understood that you are here as a guest, and only a guest, however highly honoured in that capacity, and that I am wholly and unreservedly master upon my own hearth-stone. And I must furthermore request, amongst other pieces of courteous consideration to my wishes, that I may not again be pained by hearing complaints of the most wanton insult on your part towards my friends whom you may meet here, and who as long as they honour my roof by their presence upon my invitation, have a right to expect protection from my relatives at my hands. You have already sent home the sister of one of my dearest friends in a state of grief and honest indignation, which I have no scruple in saying would perfectly justify her mother in refusing to allow her to set foot within these walls until an ample apology has been rendered for the insult inflicted upon her; and have thereby entailed upon me the bitter humiliation of making excuses, in a manner by no means complimentary to your good sense or discrimination, for the ill conduct of one, whose example ought to be my best guide, and not a source of vexation and embarrassment. I venture to hope that this will not happen again, so that a few words from me will set this unhappy matter to rights, and allow me the pleasure of Mrs. Burton's friendship as before; but if you persevere in your unkind treatment of my little favourite, I give you fair warning that I will issue formal orders to the servants to keep the doors of the picture gallery and library locked during the time that Menie is engaged in her painting or her reading, and that admission shall be denied under pain of instant dismissal. I am sorry to be obliged to speak thus, but I have no alternative."

"As for all this nonsense, Philip," replied Mrs. Darcy, with a pretence of haughtiness, though her

beating heart belied her valorous words, and a dismal terror began to pervade her mind that her dominion was fast coming to an end, politic as she still very foolishly thought it to put a bold face upon the matter, "it is beneath my notice! for you are mistaken, if you imagine that I could ever bring myself to go to law with my own son to obtain my rights, however he may impose upon a mother's love. It is safe work defying me, but I doubt if it be very manly. However, take your own way! If you are bent on ruining me, you must."

"Well mother mine," replied Phil, good humouredly, "you must have the last word, if that will do you any good; but as to putting the threats you have uttered into execution, that will turn out something like Owen Glendower's summoning of spirits from the vasty deep."

"What was that?" asked madame, snappishly.

"Why, Hotspur was of opinion, mother, that, like your London servants, they were a very long time answering the bell," replied Darcy, in a meaning tone. "Whether the heir of the Percies was right in his conjecture, Shakespeare has not informed us; perhaps not, for he was clearly not infallible in all his speculations."

"Then you intend to resist my claims upon your duty as a son?" exclaimed madame, pathetically; "be it so! society shall judge between us. I shall return to town, and hide my dishonoured head in my humble dwelling in — Square. Never again will I enter your house, either here, or at Monkworth."

"Well, that is a funny way of showing your independence, to leave one of Phil's houses in a passion, and enscore yourself in another," murmured Leila, *sotto voce*, but not so low as to escape the vigilant ears of the exasperated Mrs. Darcy.

"You impertinent little baby," shrieked she; "little girls should be seen and not heard....."

("Thank you for the compliment to my good looks, godmamma," remarked Leila, with a curtsy.)

"...I believe your scheming old father has been encouraging Philip in his rebellion against me, because he expects to make a match between you and him. Well, well, my son has odd taste; first a conjuring girl, or a rope-dancer, I don't know which, and now a little, half-grown, pert monkey like you, unless what I heard about the butcher's daughter is really true."

Darcy's cheek turned as white as ashes, and though he struggled to be calm, his voice trembled with anger. "Mother," said he, "I cannot trust myself to speak to you any more on this subject, lest I should be tempted to say something which I should afterwards regret. I grieve to be compelled to say it, but business matters must now be settled between us by purely business-like men; and although I will do everything which lies in my power to satisfy you, and to make every arrangement for your comfort that you can reasonably require, yet we must have separate establishments and separate purses from henceforth. The lady whom you style, with a singular indifference to the fact of her high birth and acknowledged station in society, the butcher's daughter, will one day, if it so please heaven, be my honoured wife, and mistress of all I possess; and though at present fate seems adverse to our hopes, I will not hear a slighting word said of her even by you. It is well said, that 'The last ounce breaks the camel's back;' beware how you lay it on."

Mrs. Darcy was commencing an angry reply, and a breach between mother and son, the consequences of which it would be difficult to foresee, would probably

have been made, when a new speaker was added to the dialogue, and Marcellus Aurantius proceeded to deliver a short zoological lecture, which was by no means without its effect upon the future policy of the lady he addressed.

"Madame," said he, politely, but rather mischievously, "my friend Philip has not quoted quite correctly, I think; at any rate, his proverb evinces a somewhat deficient knowledge of the facts connected with it, and as I am tolerably well acquainted with the animals of which he speaks, I will take the liberty of putting him right. No one who is at all well informed about the habits of the camel, would venture to assert that the last ounce ever broke the back of that wise and discerning beast, since nothing will induce him to allow more than he can conveniently carry to be put upon his shoulders; Philip must therefore have meant that too severe a load would break its back, if it would permit it to be imposed; but, in point of fact, a quarrel between camel and driver mostly ends quite differently."

"Indeed!" said Mrs. Darcy, with an air of insolent carelessness, "and how does it end?"

"The camel simply takes his persecutor by his neck, and kneels upon him," answered the Hungarian, with a smile, "or sometimes drops him in the well."

"Dear me," quoth madame, with an unpleasant suspicion that he was speaking in parables, "what nasty spiteful creatures camels must be."

"Bravo, Marcellus!" ejaculated Leila, giving him an approving dig with a pencil which Menie had left behind in her abrupt flight; "you're better worth listening to than looking at, whatever I may be according to godmamma."

"A very dubious compliment, I fear, Miss Leila," returned Marcellus, merrily, "but I have turned the

tide, I hope, and prevented any further squabbling, so I do deserve some credit for my exertions, I honestly think myself."

Nor was his self-laudation undeserved, for Mrs. Darcy began to be seriously alarmed, lest she might be going too far, and came off her stilts with a most amazing celerity; so that the next half hour was spent in very amicable arrangements as to the distribution of the visitors, until apartments could be got ready for them at the Hall, and the party separated upon much better terms than the most sanguine admirer of peace could have hoped, judging from the previous debate. The Prince was invited to stay at the Priory, owing apparently to a whispered request from Marcellus to Leila to that effect; and preparations being immediately set on foot for the speedy occupation of the Hall by the family of the young owner, the conference broke up, the lady visitors being escorted to their inn by Philip, and the Prince being marched off in triumph by Marcellus and Leila, who, exacting a promise from Phil to return to dinner, bore off their prey to the Priory, in which hospitable mansion he was comfortably housed, after a private conversation between the Colonel and the gallant Hungarian, the exact purport of which was never clearly explained. But to judge from the shouts of laughter which were audible through the closed door of the library, the communications of his young friend concerning the new arrival must have prodigiously tickled the cachinnatory muscles of the man of war.

"Who can this Italian be?" thought Leila, as she ran upstairs to take off her bonnet; "I wonder whether Marcellus will tell me. I'm sure he ought, but I am not at all sure that he will." Nor, to tell the truth, did he, at least on this identical evening, though a time came before very long, when he took her into his

confidence for the mean reason that he needed her assistance.

"Just like the men!" I hear some elderly damsel exclaim, whose curiosity has been snubbed by a long series of uncles, brothers, and nephews.

Very true, my dear madame, it is exceedingly like the men, and not always particularly unlike the ladies also.

CHAPTER VIII.

CUPID LAYS ASIDE HIS BOW AND GOES TO SCHOOL.

HAVING safely deposited his mother and sister in the best suite of rooms which the Crown and Mitre afforded, than which, by the by, you shall find very few better inns in a summer day's journey even by railroad, Phil made his excuses to the ladies for not being able to stay with them any longer, and hastened to the place of his appointment with a sturdy member of his constituency, who, according to his account, was so averse to waiting for any one, and so sternly independent in his general manners, that had her Majesty herself once made an agreement to meet him, and neglected to keep it, he would have straightway set off for Windsor, or wherever the Royal party happened to be sojourning, and would have rung at the bell unceasingly, until that gracious Lady appeared in person to apologise for her want of punctuality. Nor was the importance of his business in the least inferior to the haughtiness of his character, while his influence over the electors of Midhampton was little short of despotic, so that it was evident to the meanest comprehension, that to keep him waiting was hopelessly out of the question. Tearing himself away, therefore, from his mother and sister, and the affecting appeals to his filial love with which the former was once more about to favour him, Darcy sallied forth in search of his unappeasable townsman, and was fortunate enough to discover him before the clock struck three, in a back parlour of the Horse and Jockey.

It is to be supposed that the punctuality of our hero had marvellously soothed the acerbity of the gentleman in question, for the shrewdest judge of physiognomy would have been hard put to it to discover the slightest trace of his ferocious temper, as laying down a huge tankard, in which his round red face was buried when Darcy entered the room, he exclaimed with a sigh of relief, as though out of breath with his late performance, "Good morning, squire! I've got them ponies in the stable, if you would like to go and look at them directly; if not, I can bring them up to the Priory, whenever you like."

And upon receiving from his visitor a request to bring them the next morning, as he was rather short of time just at present, the placable dragon evinced no anger whatsoever, but promising that he would come with them in person most punctually at ten, and assuring Darcy that he might quite depend upon him, betook himself again to the tankard, and finished it in very dashing style, though not without an amount of exertion which deepened the red of his face into a dark purple. Nor would the politeness with which he insisted upon escorting Phil to the stable-yard, and holding his stirrup while he mounted, have afforded any better clue to his savage disposition; so that the only explanation of his conduct which I can suggest, is that he either was a profound hypocrite, or that Phil had most wonderfully exaggerated his griffin-like propensities in his nervous apprehension of being too late.

Leaving the inn-yard at his usual brisk pace, Darcy pursued a most circuitous route towards the Priory, turning off the direct road to canter along upon the springy turf at the side, at a point which admitted of no convenient return to the highway, and wandering so terribly out of his course at last, as to bring him

within view of the Manor instead of the legitimate end of his journey, upon discovering which, he thought it would be most discourteous to pass so near the dwelling of his political godfather, Mr. Montgomery, without calling to ask after the health of the fair invalid. So he hastened to discharge his duty of gallantry, before his natural dread of lady's society could interpose to mar his good intentions. His ring at the door was answered by one of those irreproachable footmen, who appear like allegorical representations of morality and dignity dressed in dirt-coloured coats and crimson inexpressibles, and who are calculated to strike awe into the stoutest heart by the unapproachable serenity of their demeanour. This gorgeous personage replied in the usual cut and dried terms to Phil's eager inquiries after his lady love, "That Miss Florence was much better, but had not yet left her dressing-room, though they hoped to have her downstairs for an hour or two the next day, and that Mr. Montgomery had gone down into the town to call upon the dean;" having delivered which information in a very staid and solemn voice, he was about to close the door, and take Darcy's card into the drawing-room, when Kathleen came bouncing downstairs in a prodigious hurry, and being too much pressed for time to stand upon proprieties of speech in her wish to stop the departing visitor, screamed out at the top of her voice—

"Don't be in such a haste, Mr. Darcy; Miss Florence is at home, if you wish to see her."

"Pray, Kathleen," replied Phil, smiling, "did your young lady send that message herself, then? for of that I entertain great doubt."

"No, sir, she did not," answered Kathleen; "but I am sure she will receive you. She has been up these two hours, and is only lying on the sofa in the

dressings-room, which opens upon the blue drawing-room. I'll tell her you're here in a minute."

"Nay, my good girl," said Phil, heroically conquering a strong inclination to seek an interview; "I will not intrude upon her, but give her my compliments, and say that I should have called earlier, had I not been detained by a visit."

So he turned stoutly away; but fortune, for once rewarding self-control as it deserved, sent him a deliverer from his troubles in the shape of Mr. Montgomery himself, who had now returned from the town, and greeting him in a most friendly manner, replied to his renewed inquiries after the invalid by the joyous promise that she should answer for herself, always saving and providing that no unexpected change for the worse had occurred during his absence from home.

No such cruel interruption to Phil's happiness, however, had intervened, and after a short delay of not more than ten minutes, he was ushered into the blue drawing-room, which now appeared to him a kind of ante-chamber to Paradise, and admitted to the presence of that most despotic of all monarchs, the queen of his affections. But unlimited as her powers of tyrannizing over her lover may have been, if she were disposed to exert them, it appeared upon the present occasion very far from her wish to do so, and the cordiality of her welcome satisfied even the greedy longings of the exorbitant Darcy, and left no shadow of doubt upon his mind, to disturb the blessed hope that his devotion was not only unrejected, but returned with all the warmth of her gentle nature. The events of the previous evening, indeed, had so perfectly destroyed even the filmy veil of self-deception, with which she had hitherto endeavoured to conceal her real feelings and deeply-seated love, that she now recognised the utter impossibility of resuming it; and

although her conduct was still not only maidenly and subdued, but evincing a due consciousness of the perilous situation in which the fondest hopes of the enamoured pair were at present placed, yet it was that of a high-principled girl, steadfastly purposed to sacrifice, if need be, happiness and tranquillity to self-respect, but none the less willing to confess to her own heart that it would be a bitter offering to make on the altar of duty, and pretending to no indifference upon so momentous a subject. So the large violet eyes beamed with an honest, trustful affection undimmed by cold restraint, and the pale cheeks clad themselves in love's uniform of a delicate pink, as she smiled her acknowledgment of the anxiety evinced by Darcy to be informed of her health, and assured him that she was so wonderfully improved that she hoped, before another week had expired, to be once more among her friends, and enjoying the beauties of the advancing spring. And if her little hand remained a trembling captive eleven-twentieths of a second longer than was absolutely requisite to receive with proper politeness her father's friend, and if she did not fly into a towering passion at the suspicion that it was gently pressed with more than formal courtesy, we will not condemn her to never-ceasing contempt, until we have instituted a census for the purpose of supplying statistical information as to the percentage of the female population of Great Britain who would have been more heroic under similar circumstances; rigidly excluding, however, from our computation all ladies who have never been tried, and all damsels of an uncertain age, who amidst the vineyards of Tokay itself would inveigh in the bitterest terms against the sourness of the grapes of the neighbourhood. Besides which, Phil could not help it; then why should she be angry at an involuntary error? no one could have

expected him to refrain, or if placed in his position have refrained himself; or, if there be such a monster, the saints defend me from ever being engaged in any mutual pursuit with him, unless indeed he be my charioteer from a ship-launch luncheon, and then he might be worth having, since the champagne, and the awful consumption of everything that is wet of which the mind of man is cognizant, would probably leave him in command of the requisite coolness for piloting a homeward-bound carriage. But as for such a fellow by one's side in a row, be the same moral or physical, or a companion during a picturesque tour, or a visit to a picture gallery, or under any circumstances when the heart of a man is better than that of a toad, far be such an evil fate from you and yours, dear reader, and from your humble servant also. So I candidly confess that Phil did give that dear little hand a gentle squeeze, and that Florence felt the pressure, but was no more shocked than is expressly directed in the statute in that case made and provided. But with that exception, the discretion of both parties rivalled that of the famous princess of mythological fame, whose principal exhibition of prudence, as recorded in the "Child's Own Book," consisted in rolling a wicked prince down a steep hill in a barrel, tastefully fitted up with penknives and tenterhooks for the commodious transmission of her own fair person down that perilous descent, by the very gentleman who ultimately travelled by it himself.

"I have indeed had a narrow escape, Philip," said Florence, in answer to a remark from her companion to much the same effect, "and only yesterday I neither expected nor wished for prolongation of life; but already my feelings are so altered, that I could less willingly bid farewell to the world just at present, than at any period of my existence. For it seems to me, I

scarcely know why, as though I had more ties to bind me, and more duties that I would fain perform before I go to my place, than I ever believed it possible that I could have found. You have only seen one side of me at present, and that too, I venture to hope, not the most solid, even if in the eyes of some judges it may seem the most amusing. Hitherto, I have only been a very merry, madcap girl, whose leading characteristic was her love of fun, and her most brilliant accomplishment an excellent seat and light hand on horseback; now you will have to connect me in your mind with Sunday-schools and rheumatic old women in red cloaks, not to prematurely alarm you with the dismal suspicions entertained of me in certain quarters, as a secret emissary of His Holiness the Pope, and a most pestilent disseminator of Puseyitical books, and idolatrous observer of times and seasons held in utter detestation by all good Protestants."

"Under no circumstances, dear lady," responded Darcy, "shall I more highly honour you, than in the performance of those gentle works of charity which I have not now to learn that you busy yourself in forwarding with such graceful zeal; and although I should be the last person in the world to undervalue the attractions of your lively wit and brilliant powers of conversation, I candidly own that I am not sorry to discover that you can cheerfully lay them aside for a time, to undertake the more useful though less ostentatious character to which you now allude. As to your religious opinions, I am sorry to say that I am not quite as good a judge of such matters as I ought to be, and should make but a poor figure in a polemical discussion; but as I certainly like to see the professors of the True Faith exert themselves to do something to prove their zeal, instead of wholly confining themselves to mere verbal declarations of their

fidelity, and am decidedly in favour of the clergy being men of gentlemanlike demeanour, scholastic acquirements, and business habits of practical utility in the improvement of their parishes, not platform orators or clever caterers for the public taste in pulpit eloquence, I shrewdly suspect that we shall not quarrel very bitterly upon that subject. And by dint of enrolling myself as one of your pupils, if you will condescend to receive such a stupid fellow for your disciple, I hope before very long to be able to form a clearer judgment upon the abstruse merits of the doctrinal questions of the day than I could venture to give at this present speaking, when my principal armoury of religious arguments would be the Church Catechism, in which I was educated as a child, and such natural deductions as my own poor mother-wit might permit me to draw from the Bible itself and the Book of Common Prayer, for of works of Theology I know very little indeed."

"You remind me of that profoundly wise man, the last royal jester, if I may make so uncomplimentary a comparison," said Florence, laughing, "when he expressed his moderate contentment in the notable declaration, that the best of everything was good enough for him, for you gravely urge, that you can only support your creed by the most wondrous digest of all that is necessary for a Christian man's spiritual health, which the mind of man has ever compassed! as though a rule of faith, abundantly sufficient to engage the undivided attention of the wisest of men, were a mere trifle. But to return to your promise to become my pupil: you must not be over-rash in thus trusting yourself to my mercy, for one of the principal landed proprietors of the neighbourhood would be such a magnificent prey to fall into my nets, and would afford such a delightful object for my extortions in favour of my schools, and multifarious little schemes,

that you must expect no pains to be spared to ensure your capture. And since you once laid upon my shoulders the blame of having converted you into a Member of Parliament, beware lest you be next turned into parson's churchwarden, or some other transformation equally fearful, through an exaggerated obedience to me, who would glory in seeing the gentry throughout all England filling their legitimate sphere by being first and foremost in every scheme for the improvement of society and the establishment of a sound, unostentatious scale of morality amongst all classes of men."

"And what happier lot could await me," replied Darcy, "than to be so honourably reformed from the useless, unthinking man of pleasure I have hitherto been? or what destiny could you offer me more worthy of the attention or admiration of an earnest man, than to be the humble means of elevating others, and furthering by my wealth, or my industrious support of wiser heads than my own, the good cause of diminishing poverty and crime, by removing the ignorance and narrow-mindedness from whence it most fruitfully springs?"

"If these are your sentiments," exclaimed Florence, eagerly, "you will have abundance of opportunities through life of putting your good intentions into execution. I can hardly tell you how delighted I am to hear you speak thus on a subject, in which I was more prepared to be a little disappointed in you, than in any other. Pardon me that I did you injustice, but I own that I thought you more alive to the fascinations of glory, ambition, or even popularity in general society, than to the claims of the steady and unassuming duties of an every-day life; and though I could readily imagine your dying for your country or your sovereign in open warfare, or cheerfully submit-

ting to all perils and privations which were gilded by a romantic sense of honour, I hardly fancied you as likely a person as I could have desired, to devote a lifetime to the faithful administration of the influence which your property and talent well fit you to exercise over those around you. But I must not lecture you too unmercifully, lest your patience be all exhausted in your first lesson from your new instructress, and you be driven to as terrible despair as the disciples of that learned pedagogue who was assassinated by his scholars with their penknives, as their only escape from the long string of irregular verbs with which he daily tormented his luckless pupils."

"You speak as a young lady, not as a classical scholar, I am afraid, fair Florence," replied Darcy, gaily, "for the irregular verbs, of which you entertain so lively a horror, as connected with the modern languages which you have learned, had very little to do, I suspect, with the sorrows of those exasperated youths, who committed the justifiable homicide of which you speak. Their grievances, as I have understood, consisted in having to commit to memory sundry thousands of logical and grammatical rules, composed in what was facetiously styled poetry by their erudite instructor, and if you had been painfully driven through the Eton Latin and Greek grammars as I have, and seen the hideous distortion of all language, and barbarous mediævalisms therein contained, you would be able to form some faint idea of what a similar work must have been, with the additional aggravation of being written in verse. So they fell upon him in sheer despair, and did him to death with their knives, and having thus scratched out his abominable rules to some purpose, alike from the tablets of their memory and the face of the earth, the land had rest many years, though, as I before remarked,

a new course of torments has now succeeded, only to be equalled in atrocity by that which brought its author to so well-merited a doom. But as to my tiring of your instructions, I am sure that there is not the least danger of that, even though you were to deliver lectures upon mixed mathematics, which, as is generally the case with mixed things, are even more detestable than pure, though the latter are bad enough, to the best of my limited acquaintance with them, to deserve an *auto-da-fé* of all the professors of such dark and malignant sciences. You promised some time ago to be my councillor; you brought before my eyes visions of the interest you would take in my well-doing, so bright and glorious, that I cannot bear to part with them, and you must not be worse than your word. In fact, I insist upon your keeping your agreement to be my monitress with a pertinacity worthy of Shylock himself, and you have no alternative left you but to perform your task with a good grace."

"Very well," said Florence, "I will undertake the office, only you must not blame me, if you become terribly tired of my lectures, and bitterly repent your rashness in having brought them upon yourself by your own indiscretion. What with looking after the condition of the labourers on your estates, the adjustment of the rents of your poorer tenants, of whom you have an immense number, very little removed, in point of means or orderly habits, from the very poorest Irish peasants, and the lamentable dilapidation of the cottages in your two villages, you will have enough to occupy you for a time, abundantly sufficient to satisfactorily test the perseverance, as well as the zeal, of your desire to do good; and if you can apply yourself steadily to these improvements, and give them the benefit of your personal supervision,

I will readily acknowledge that you promise well to become as useful a landlord as our county can boast of possessing. But we must see some fruits of your intentions, before we give too much credit to the miraculous conversion of a gay young Cantab into a sober country gentleman, a transformation usually requiring the hand of Time to achieve. By the by, I have to congratulate you on the commencement of your Parliamentary career, which I hear extremely lauded by the whole neighbourhood, more I fancy in consequence of your attention to some local bill, which had caught cold in Mr. Tomnoddy's pocket, and nearly died of the neglect, than because of your maiden speech, with which, however, papa was so pleased, that he has cast it in the teeth of the Yellow party ever since. But joking apart, I assure you that you have quite won the hearts of the worthy electors of Midhampton, and are considered certain of re-election upon the next dissolution, without any opposition being offered to your return; so you see that I was not so very far wrong in wishing you to turn your attention to public affairs."

That Phil answered in a most gallant manner no one can doubt, and that his eloquence began to take a rather more sentimental turn is hardly to be wondered at, so that the conversation gradually glided into a half-whispered interchange of what was love, but they considered merely friendship and esteem, of which there is no necessity to retain a record, since that which was so sweet and so interesting to them would be somewhat dull to a third party.

Therefore, dear reader, I think we had better leave them to their self-deceptive projects of mutual support through the various trials and duties of life, and their stout-hearted confidence in entertaining for each other feelings of regard, all the higher and holier for

being purged from earthly hope and worldly passion, wilfully blind to the evident fact that they were childish and ridiculously in love, if so pure a feeling can be thus harshly spoken of, and firmly convinced that they have valiantly overcome all danger of paying dearly for these sweet hours of companionship, by the heightened agony of separation hereafter, and let us return to the joyous party at the Priory, who appeared to have life enough, and to spare, for a whole wilderness of sighing lovers like Florence and her adorer, to which merry group was now added Julia Darcy, whom the Colonel had insisted upon bearing off to spend the day, directly that he had heard of her arrival, permitting, with more discrimination than gallantry, her delicate mother to have her own way, in her expressed desire to remain at home and rest after her journey. But for his favourite Julia he would take no denial or excuse, not that any very decided objection was made to her joining the circle at the Priory, especially after the old soldier, with a craftiness befitting that appellation, had thrown in a well-timed allusion to the solitary condition of the princely Italian, and the satisfaction which it would be to him, to see at least one familiar face at the dinner-table of his host.

To what extent he really profited by her presence, it is unnecessary for me to explain in this place, as we shall judge better of that when we have sat a few minutes in their company, and listened to the conversation which ran merrily on, despite the unexpected absence of Philip Darcy, for whom they waited almost an hour before they would give him up as an incorrigible truant, and sit down to dinner without him. But a new scene and new actors demand a new chapter.

CHAPTER IX.

THE LYNX SHARPENS ITS CLAWS ON THE PRIORY
HEARTHSTONE.

"WHAT can have become of that scapegrace Phil, if one may venture to speak in such terms of our Member, without committing a breach of privilege?" said the gallant Colonel, as the servants were setting the dessert upon the table, the whole dinner having passed over without a sign of the missing guest. "He cannot be staying at the Manor House, because there has just been a parcel left for him by Montgomery's groom; besides which, I know that the Squire has promised to go to Lord Siraledale's to-night, to meet a party of friends whom he knew when he was in Italy, and Phil would not stay when he was out. I should hardly think that the good boy has taken such a dutiful fit into his head as to stop with his mamma, to say nothing of its being very doubtful if she would wish him to do so. I am quite at a loss, therefore, to imagine what can have become of him, unless he has met with some accident on the road."

"Perhaps he has gone to have his fortune told by Mrs. Krummacher," suggested Leila; "you know that she is rather learned in astrology, and an old friend of his into the bargain; and as in this case she could certainly promise him success, with an unusual amount of certainty of being right, it is just possible that he has gone up to her house to seek her intercession with the planets."

"My dear child," replied her father, very seriously,

"I am sorry to hear you making a joke even of the troubles and unmerited misfortune of one of your kindest friends. Few habits are less amiable, and at the same time more liable to grow imperceptibly upon a young person if indulged, than this fault of allowing a love of jesting to prevail over better impulses, and of thinking an opportunity to utter some merry satire too precious to be sacrificed even to a proper sense of what is due to the feelings of others."

The colour mounted to Leila's cheek, and tears of proud vexation, at her meaning being so roughly misinterpreted, stood in her eyes, as she replied in a tone of respectful submission to her father's rebuke, and without a vestige of the childish impertinence which usually characterized her answers even to the Colonel, "I assure you, dear papa, that I meant nothing unkind towards Phil, however stupidly I may have expressed myself. I am sure no one could have been more sorry for him than I was, when I heard of the persecution to which he was exposed, and no one would more sincerely rejoice than I to be informed that it was brought to an end. All that I intended to say in that silly speech of mine, was simply that as Madame Krummacher has his destiny in her hands to some extent—for although it may not be exactly in her power to bind him, it certainly is to loose him, since after a confession on her part, that his account of the mock ceremonial is true, the whole affair falls the ground—it is not improbable that he may have entered into some negotiations with her, to obtain that acknowledgment, and may be even now at Mr. Whiting's arranging the terms of compromise. And as a letter came for him this afternoon, which was brought by young Willie Lawson, who is a copying clerk in Mr. Whiting's office, and I am almost sure that it came from her, this seems a very reasonab-

supposition. But as to making fun of poor Phil's trouble, I would not willingly have done such a thing for the world. Pray do not think so miserably ill of my good nature, as to imagine that I could find pleasure in laughing at the distress of my kindest friend."

"I am very glad to hear your explanation, Leila," returned the Colonel, "for I have a profound horror of this confusion of unkindness or heartlessness with wit. Many a man has sacrificed a good friend rather than lose a very poor jest; and many a woman has estranged the affection of her best and most honourable admirer by a fatal indulgence in this very habit. But really, if you speak in such riddles, you must not expect me to understand you, for I never shone in the deciphering of dark and mysterious parables at any period of my life."

"Certainly not, papa," said Leila, recovering her spirits, "considering that you could not find out 'what vegetables are held in most abhorrence by English officers?' though three rows of scarlet-runners were staring you full in the face at the very time when I propounded the question to you in the garden."

"I hardly wonder at your father being unable to solve the enigma, fair Pythoness, seeing that the last quality of which one is reminded by a British soldier is the fitness of his organization for running away," remarked Marcellus, courteously. "And to tell the truth, your parables are rather far-fetched, as well as difficult of comprehension, witness your handsome compliment to my patriotism, when in allusion to the heraldic emblem of my house, you called me 'the most galling links (lynx) in the chain of slavery,' to say nothing of your libellous comparison of his Imperial and Apostolic Majesty to a double-faced kite, meaning thereby a double-headed eagle."

"That is one extraordinary good name," exclaimed the Italian, breaking silence for the first time during dinner, except to denote his sovereign pleasure as to what dish he proposed to honour with his patronage ; "a kite is a baird that lives on the little creeping mouses, and poor weak things that cannot help themselves, and never flies after the strong, or fights with others of the same size, is it not ? That is one very particular good name, I think."

"The kite is much such a bird, I believe, Signor di Capello," answered Marcellus, haughtily, "and so is no fit emblem of the Emperor or his government, though it may please our fair friend to compare him to one, in a merry mood. And now having spoken of one armorial bearing, permit me to say a few words of my own. A lynx is an animal justly celebrated for its keen sight, and detection of things hidden in impenetrable obscurity to less piercing eyes, and it also has extremely long and sharp claws ! I saw one tear open the throat of a powerful dog, and kill it in less than five minutes, hardly six months ago."

"I agree with the Prince of Cobra di Capello," said Leila, gravely, amidst a shout of laughter from Marcellus, the Colonel, and Julia, "that it is an excellent name for his Imperial Majesty ; for you all confess that a kite is a notable destroyer of all kinds of creeping vermin, and never molests the nobler creatures, and therefore....."

"You none of you know anything at all about the nature of kites," interrupted the Colonel, anxious to turn the conversation out of so dangerous a channel, "and I must beg of you to take a few lessons in natural history from my gamekeepers before you presume to argue on the point any more. Our good friend, Marcellus, is very naturally a stickler for his own government, the Prince appears to share the prejudices

of his countrymen against the court of Vienna ; so let the matter rest. In the house of a neutral party these differences may be dropped without dishonour. If you could manage to cut an orange into some ridiculous shape for Leila, Marcellus, you might stop her mouth perhaps, which would be one grand point gained in the cause of peace, for Bellona herself could not revel in setting people by the ears with a keener relish than my little monkey of a daughter."

"With great pleasure," replied the young Count, immediately commencing his appointed task, "and I am sure that I am as great an enemy to the Scythian custom of quarrelling over the dinner-table as any one can possibly be, especially in such excellent company as that of the ladies who are honouring us with their society ; but a deliberate insult towards the monarch under whom I serve, and whose favour I enjoy so much beyond my poor merits, could not be passed over in silence."

"Quite right !" exclaimed Miss Dosy ; "if you draw your pay, you ought to keep a civil tongue in your head for the man with the money-bag, and not speak ill of the bush you sit under. I remember very well what old Dr. Quill said of the cholera, when it first made its appearance, and think it is just to the point. They made him one of the fellows who inspected ships, to see if there were any cases of cholera on board when they came into quarantine (for they took precautions against importing the disease in those days), and gave him a fine big salary for doing it. Well, one day there was another doctor disputing with him about contagion, and declaring that the quarantine was all nonsense, so after a long jabber the strange doctor says to Quill—

"I doubt, my good friend, that you have never looked upon this question in an impartial way, or

listened fairly to the arguments on both sides, for if you had you must have been convinced by this time that you are perfectly wrong.'

"'You old fool!' roared Quill, 'do you suppose I want any better argument in favour of its being contagious than a good appointment for saying that it is. By the top-boots of St. Patrick, with which he kicked the vipers out of Ireland! but it's a pretty figure that I'd be cutting, to give my opinion in favour of robbing myself of the best job I've had for many a day.' And I think he was right."

"Thank you, madame, for your complimentary comparison," returned Marcellus, bowing low, "but I beg to say, that my respect for my Imperial master is not the mere consequence of mercenary policy, but of a sincere conviction that loyalty is the true wisdom of every real patriot within his dominions."

"Ah, patriotism is a very fine thing," quoth Miss Dosy, turning up her eyes, "but mighty dangerous at times! especially if your ideas of it and those of other people don't happen to be the same. It was very nearly proving the death of an old friend of mine, as fine a man as ever stepped. Many a country-dance have I gone down with him to the tune of 'The Wind that shakes the Barley,' and many a glass of punch have I made for him, which he always used to ask me to sweeten by putting my lips to it—not that it saved the sugar though, I can assure you. But as I was saying, his patriotism was nearly being the death of him, and this is how it fell out: He had been at a little friendly supper-party with Father Peter Connor, the priest of the parish adjoining the one in which he lived, and they had been amusing themselves with a rubber of whist, until somehow or other they could not deal any longer, and the cards got so lively that they kept jumping out of their hands; so they left off, and he"

a little of the real potteen, to steady their nerves as they rode home, and then separated quite quiet and orderly to their quarters. But as ill-luck would have it, Tim Delaney fell in with a body of patriots returning from a ribbon meeting, where they had been planning the execution of a bloody-minded Saxon, who required his tenants to pay part of their rent, or else quit their holdings; so their minds were naturally rather inflamed by a sense of their wrongs. In fact, when I tell you that the party contained one of the servants of the foreign oppressor, and that the gallant fellow had just advanced the money which his master had given him as a fairing, to buy the powder and shot to punish him as he deserved, and had promised to get the hard-hearted old villain into a convenient place, under pretence of taking him to see a bed-ridden old woman, and so put him up for a fair mark for the heroes behind the hedge, you may easily suppose that they were not in a very mild humour, and that it was as well for any one who fell in with them to coincide in their little fancies as much as possible.

“‘Whose side are you on?’ said they, surrounding old Delaney on all sides, for it was about the time of a general election, and they were great politicians.

“‘On Mickey Blake’s,’ says he, for he thought they were talking about the whist.

“‘On whose?’ said they, and there was a flourish of shillelaghs, which it would have made a nervous man’s bones ache all over to have witnessed.

“‘On Mickey Blake’s, to be sure,’ said he, ‘and a fine man at this work he is, too.’

“Now, unluckily, Tom Blake was talked of as likely to be brought forward as the government candidate, so they thought the Major had made a mistake in the name, and meant that he was against them, so they howled till you could have heard them a mile off, and their blackthorns worse than ever.

“‘If it hadn’t been for that infernal club of yours,’ growled Delaney, thinking of his game, ‘it’s a made man that I’d have been. I’d not have left a spade amongst the lot of you, and beaten you out of doors in a pig’s whisper.’

“‘The bloody-minded old villain!’ thought they, for they took for granted he was one of the landlords who had been ejecting their tenants, and that he meant that he would have turned every cottar on his estate out of doors, if he had not been afraid of the Ribbon-clubs. ‘It’s not a spade you’d have left amongst us, is it, you black-hearted Turk?’ roared they, crowding round him and brandishing their sticks over his head; ‘then it’s a blessing that we have got a club belonging to us, that’s all! but if you don’t get off your horse and promise on your knees to behave better in future, and to stand up for justice to Ireland you’re a dead man.’

“‘Never, boys,’ said the Major, catching at the words, ‘never will I wish to see justice inflicted on my country! never while I live, no, never! Justice for Ireland indeed! bad luck to me if I drink that toast, if I never see a drop of whiskey again until I give in to that rascally sentiment. No, I love poor old Erin too well for that! and I hope I shall never have justice while the crows fly.’ No sooner had he said this than they set upon him in a body, and pulled him off his horse, and the way they handled him was a sight to see. They beat him with sticks as if they were laying down a new pavement; they kicked him until their legs ached; and lastly, danced ‘Cover the Buckle’ all over him, till he hadn’t a wheeze of breath in his body. At last, after half an hour’s amusement with him, they thought they might as well see how the savage old heathen was getting on, who was so bitterly disposed towards their country. I cannot tell

you how amazed they were to find that it was Major Delaney, one of the most popular men in the county, and as good a Catholic as ever eat a widgeon upon fast-days."

"That is rather an odd way of showing your orthodoxy, is it not?" asked Julia.

"Not a taste of it," answered Miss Dosy, sturdily, "all kinds of fish, winged or finned, scaly or feathered, are allowed on fast-days; so it is quite in order to eat wild ducks, and all other water creatures, down to the otters, if you happen to like them. I appeal to you, Count, isn't it quite true?"

Marcellus answered in the affirmative, as far as his knowledge and belief went, but disclaimed any personal experience in the matter, as his constitution had always been too weak to bear the full austerities of Lent, and he had a dispensation.

"Very well," said Julia, "it is as well to know what to expect if one should happen to live in a Catholic country. I am glad to find that the bill of fare during Lent is drawn up on such liberal principles."

As she spoke she caught the eye of Marcellus alternately resting on herself and the Italian prince with a very curious expression of countenance, as though he imagined that her allusion to living in Catholic countries had something to do with that exalted personage, and was not pleased with the idea. But not being able to think of any convenient manner in which to convey to him a sense of his mistake, she turned to Miss Dosy, with a heightened colour and confused air, which corroborated instead of diminishing the suspicions of the Hungarian, and begged that loquacious old damsel to conclude her story.

"The boys were very much astonished, as I told you before," recommenced Miss O'Flaherty, "to see who it was they had been so misusing, and finding that

he was not as much damaged as might reasonably have been expected, for he was accustomed to a roughish time of it in the Peninsula, they picked him up, and beginning to guess that the whiskey had something to do with the matter, set to work to make out what could have induced such a staunch friend to speak in the way he had done, for they knew well enough that he was not the man to care a rush candle for all the landlords in Ireland.

“ ‘Oh, Major, darling!’ said they, in a chorus like a Dutch frog-swamp, ‘why did you speak so hardly of the old country? Is it joking that you are, or have you really turned against us, and sold yourself to the Saxons? You’ve been a good man these many years, and what has set you against us now?’

“ ‘Justice to Ireland, you stupid spalpeens!’ groaned Delaney, ‘how can you be such fools as to want such a thing, while you go on as you do now? what would that be but halters, and treadmills, and bayonets? and that’s what you’ll bring yourselves to some day, I honestly believe. But I’m a real patriot, and don’t want to see that time, however much you may deserve it, so once more I say Bad luck to jus.....’ here he fainted with pain, so they carried him to Pat O’Shaughnessy’s mill, and giving him three cheers, left him to sleep off his bruises as well as he could. Ah, patriotism is a dangerous thing, you see.”

“ ‘Certainly,’ replied Marcellus gravely, “so I heartily recommend the moral of your story to my excellent friend, Signor di Capello, who also belonged to an assassination-club when I first had the honour of forming his acquaintance, and who would do well to consider attentively the good sense of Major Delaney’s idea of justice, that he may fully comprehend the injury done to a nation by the committal of acts of such enormity, as to justify the strictest surveillance being

kept over those who are so manifestly incompetent to govern themselves."


"I cannot understand why you should be so bitter against me," said the Italian, in his native language; "I have never injured your government in the very least degree; indeed I have been of considerable assistance to them, and am still in receipt of a pension for my services."

Marcellus laughed, but made no reply, while Leila, who was well acquainted with Italian, treasured up every word in her mind, to communicate to Julia as soon as they were left alone together, as well as to afford a subject for a vigorous examination of her friend, the Count, as to the meaning of these mysterious allusions exchanged between himself and the illustrious Prince.

In vain did the Colonel attempt to turn the conversation, for Marcellus appeared determined to be rude to the unfortunate Italian, who bore it all with a patience very little in keeping with the fiery nature of his race, and with the aspect of a well-whipped cur, rather than that of a member of a noble family exposed to causeless and unprovoked insult. Nor could he get rid of the ladies, whom he more than half suspected were in some indirect manner the involuntary instigators of the merciless worrying to which the Prince was now exposed; for Miss Dosy had taken a prodigious fancy to Marcellus, and extremely enjoyed the sport of quizzing the lantern-jawed Italian, so there was no moving her short of a crow-bar, and until she rose the young ladies of course were obliged to keep their seats.

At length he ventured to suggest the expediency of coffee, and at this very broad hint Miss Dosy condescended to show some symptoms of moving, although then it was abundantly evident that she meant

to migrate with the gentlemen, and not a moment before ; so the whole party commenced their departure, when a furious ring was heard at the door, and rush-into the Hall with a face as white as ashes, and trembling with excitement, Philip Darcy made his long-expected appearance, and seizing Marcellus by the arm, pulled him into the library, and turned the key with a violence which fully betokened his agitation of mind.



CHAPTER X.

PAULINE PLANS A BRILLIANT CHECK BY DISCOVERY.

OUR story now retrogrades a few hours, and transports us from the Priory and its gay party to the prim, cheerless drawing-room of Mr. Whiting, where Pauline and her legal adviser are seated in high debate upon the subject of a letter, which that limb of Satan has just received from Mr. Owen, who, as the reader will probably remember, acted for Philip Darcy in his present dilemma. To say that the lady was knitting is tantamount to the important information that she was breathing also, for German women never abstain from that manual labour except under circumstances rendering its performance physically impossible; but well had it been for her had her tongue and brains not been engaged at the same time in a species of manufacture less creditable to her than that of her fingers. For while she fondly hoped that she was weaving a web to ensnare Philip Darcy, as dexterously and strongly made as the cotton stocking which was rapidly growing under her practised hands, she was in reality twisting a rope for her own neck, and a grisly phantom was standing by her elbow grinning from ear to ear at her misapplied ingenuity. In plain truth the work on which she was engaged was as good an allegorical representation of the nature and termination of her mental labours as could well have been found; for in few occupations of the fingers is the whole trouble more speedily and easily undone by an untoward accident, or mischievous interloper. Carefully and pains-

takingly do we knit row upon row of our schemes, as Pauline is now doing with her stocking ; we shape them, we introduce fancy patterns into them, and bedizen them with coloured clocks, when lo and behold ! fate, like some ne'er-do-weel kitten, seizes the thread and jerks it off the needles ! whirr, whirr ! goes one row after another, till nothing remains but a towzled heap of cotton, lying in a mass in the middle of the floor, all crumpled and crimped like the late preposterous fashion in hair, and giving us all our trouble over again. And not unseldom the same fate, not contented with unravelling the web, throws the cotton itself into the fire, and leaves us looking with blank faces at our empty hands. But to our tale.

“ I think, Madame Krummacher,” said Mr. Whiting to his client, “ that the offer contained in the letter before us, is far too good to be rashly rejected, and that you had much better close with it at once, and drop all further proceedings. It is abundantly evident that you will gain nothing by establishing your claim, which you cannot have quite as comfortably surrendered to you without pressing it. The settlement which Mr. Darcy offers is a very handsome one indeed for a wife with whom he declines to live ; and that he will be supported by the sympathy of all his friends in refusing to share the same home with you, can be a matter of no reasonable doubt. You have neither wealth, nor station, nor character to support by your present conduct, in fact in all these respects you are likely to lose ; for permit me to say, that in nothing is the English expression, ‘ One man may lead a horse down to the well, but a thousand can’t make him drink,’ more painfully verified, if the husband chooses, than in effecting a forced marriage.”

“ I do not understand these proverbs,” answered Pauline, sullenly, “ all I know about it is this, that I

am tolerably certain to win my cause, and that I shall in that case establish my claim to the name of his wife."

"And much good may it do you," replied Whiting, with a sneer; "but as you want to know the meaning of what I said just now, I will soon make you understand me. Are you so blind as not to see that it is one thing to thrust yourself into his house, and another to force him to behave kindly to you when you are there? Cannot you imagine the reception you are likely to meet with among his friends, and can you be mad enough to be willing to face it? Upon my life, I would rather be thrown into a well full of rats, than intrude myself into an aristocratic family as you purpose to do! You have evidently no idea of what it is, but I can assure you that it is no joke, for I have tried it. When I was quite a young man I made up to a lady of independent property who was within a few months of being of age, and although her friends opposed the match with all their might, I thought, as you do now, that I had the game in my own hands, and refused to listen to all their expostulations. At last a cousin of hers, who, as I had been told, was rather sweet upon her himself, came to call upon me in my office, and the moment I saw him I made up my mind that there would be a row, and an action for assault at the least. But not a bit of it! he was extremely polite to me, talked about accepting the existing state of affairs with a good grace, asked me to dinner at his father's the next day, and promised to introduce me to the whole of his set. So I dressed myself in all my smartest toggery, bought a scarlet and blue cascade handkerchief on purpose, and went off in high glee to the party, but I soon found out my mistake. If everybody there had been at a college for cold, good-tempered impertinence, and had studied hard during all

their three years, they would have done credit to their training, by the perfection to which they had brought the art of insulting a man in a thousand different ways, none of which he could lay hold of to resent. I never spent such an evening in my life, and I hope I never shall again ; but it quite cured me of having the least inclination to poke my nose into such a wasp's nest in future. So when the young chap who had invited me, and who to do him justice had been quite the polite host to me himself, accompanied me into the hall when I left, and asked me if I could give him a lift in my cab to his club, I was more than half inclined to tell him to go about his business, but having a sort of an idea that I had better go through with it, I grumbled out something about being delighted at the prospect of being of any service to him, and drove off in his company, as savage as a bear.

“ ‘ A charming party ! ’ said he, as we jolted over the stones, ‘ very nice friendly people, when you come to know them well.’

“ ‘ Are they ? ’ growled I ; ‘ but the job of learning their little fancies seems rather disagreeable, I think.’

“ ‘ Well, perhaps it is,’ he replied, striking a lucifer against his boot and lighting a cigar—‘ foreign habits and customs mostly are, I fancy ; and I am almost inclined to suspect that you were as much out of your latitude to night, as Columbus was when he run down America one fine evening. I’ve just been thinking’—here he puffed vigorously away at his cigar, as if it wouldn’t draw properly—‘ that if I were you.....’—another pause, with a string of puff, puff, puff, apparently all to no purpose—‘ I’d rather be lawyer than nephew-in-law to my governor.’ So saying, he flung his cigar out of window into the face of an old woman who was standing at the corner of the street, and striking another match almost suffocated me by holding

it under my nose while he fumbled in his pocket for his penknife to slit his caçadore before he began to smoke.

“I told him, as soon as I had done coughing, that I was very much of his opinion ; and the end of it was that I agreed to take a sum of money to set me up in a practice of my own (for up to that time I was clerk to old Weezil, in Southampton Buildings), and to give up my claims upon my fair lady’s hand, upon the additional promise of plenty of nice disreputable business, when any of the family got into a row. And I assure you that I made a very good bargain, for although I never got any job from them, except what is generally called the dirty work of the profession, yet there is such a fine opening for a sort of scavenger, in keeping these noble youths sweet and wholesome, and getting rid of the Jews and blacklegs who follow them about like gadflies after a horse, that I have laid by a very pretty penny, besides making a much better match after all—for Mrs. Whiting is the daughter of an eminent marine-store dealer, and his clients are very liable to become mine also, as a very fair proportion of them are tried at some period of their lives for mistaking other people’s goods for their own ; and defending a respectable thief is an excellent day’s work. Now, if you will take my advice, you will sell your ticket of admission into good society for what it will fetch, which seems to be a very good price for it besides, and invest the money in the Funds, where you may secure a very snug little income, abundantly enough to cut quite a swell in your own country, or if you prefer an annuity to the ready money, that also is perfectly at your service. For of this you may feel quite sure, that even if you were to succeed in your suit, you would gain nothing by it except a barren name, or a life of continual vexations. He has nothing to do but

to leave you and his friends to fight it out amongst yourselves, and it is all over with your comfort as long as you live."

"He must pay all my debts at any rate," said Pauline, "so if he behaves ill in one way, I can revenge myself upon him in another, so we are on pretty equal grounds there. Besides which, he is so proud, that the very idea of exposing the failings of any one whose name is mixed up with his own will give him such pain, that he will never dare to quarrel with me, and I can always keep him order by the threat of a scene unless he gives way."

"Don't be too sure of that," returned Whiting, "for a scene in which a man expects all his friends to be against him is a very different affair to one in which everybody will take his part. I can easily believe that Darcy is as averse as any other youngster to figuring in an undignified squabble with a lady of his own set; but you will be a 'person,' or to copy a word from the most highly-scented of my dandy-persecutors, 'a created existence,' which is quite another affair. Now, we have plenty of laws in England to protect horses and dogs, and dumb animals, nor does our Statute-book absolutely exclude women, as far as beating them or pulling them downstairs by the hair is concerned, not but what in that case a very pretty defence might be put in, that it was not by the hair itself but by the false plaits, which are not defended by law; and I almost think I could get a client off upon that score, for it would be difficult nowadays to prove the difference. But however that may be, we have neither justice nor mercy for a 'person,' which means in polite slang a cuckoo in the nest of aristocracy. And you cannot bring an action against your husband's relations for being ashamed of you, or indict his mother for shaking her head as if she had a face-ache when your

name is mentioned, nor can you either prevent or avenge one quarter of the rudeness to which you will be exposed. And let a man be never so well-disposed, how can he protect his wife against the other women, who sneer at her, and patronize her, and shirk out of her way whenever she comes to their end of the room? It is out of the question altogether."

"Whatever Philip Darcy's faults may be," interrupted Pauline, "there is no want of spirit about him, and he will not be the man to stand tamely by and see his wife insulted."

"As to actual insult, perhaps not," replied Whiting; "but will he disagree with those among his friends who think that it is a pity he did not marry better? will he be offended at those who prefer Miss Montgomery's manners to yours, or who wish his sister to be guided by her opinion rather than that of his wife? And if you like feeling every day how inferior you are considered to the whole society in which you move, you must have odd taste."

"But I do not see why I should be thought so infinitely inferior to them," remarked Pauline; "I have been well educated, and if I am not noble, neither is he—besides which, my mother came of an excellent family: her grandfather held a high office under the Landgrave of —, and was a great man in his day; and surely if Philip Darcy holds Miss Montgomery in such honour, because one of her ancestors was a constable in Scotland, he ought to respect me very highly indeed, when he considers that my great grandfather was headsman to a grand Prince, whose territories extended more than five miles in every direction from his capital, and about fourteen to the south."

"For the difference between Lord High Constable of Scotland and Jack Ketch to a Baron who most

likely was a bigger robber than the people he hanged," rejoined Whiting, not condescending to notice Pauline's little confusion of terms, "I for one don't care a pin, but society does; and as for education, if you had the gift of tongues enough to have acted as interpreter at the building of Babel, it would do you no earthly good here, if you cannot hold your knife and fork decently, or wind your legs round your chair like a snake. But it is no use bothering about that—if you are determined to press your case, you must; but I will give you one warning: your husband will leave you in the lurch, I feel convinced (I mean Mr. Krummacher, of course), and you will have to make out your case as well as you can without him."

"Karl Krummacher turn round upon me!" shrieked Pauline, "you must be mistaken there; he is more anxious for the marriage to be established than I am by far, and has a deeper interest in it, for....." here she abruptly ceased, as if afraid that she had been on the verge of letting out a secret that was better kept to herself for awhile; but if so, her precaution was useless, for Whiting immediately filled up the sentence for her.

"He was married already, and both times in England!" said he; "very true, but so were you upon your own showing—at least in Great Britain; but that might be some little hold upon him no doubt. However, what makes me think him wavering is this: I met him this morning in the lane behind his house, and he seemed very nervous and excited about something, so I thought it was only friendly and neighbourly to ask him what was the matter.

"‘Holloa, doctor!’ says I, for I mostly call every foreigner doctor as a little joke, ‘how pale and seedy you look! one would think you had met the devil in

your walk, for you are as white as a sheet, and you are trembling all over.'

" 'I've met somebody a precious deal worse than him,' replied he, 'for I never heard of any one coming to any harm through his visits; but I met a man yesterday out of whose way I would willingly have hidden myself in the most filthy dungeon you could find, for if there be any human being in the whole world whom I fear, it is that accursed tyrant, Marcellus Aurantius.'

"Now I remembered to have heard this name, as belonging to the foreigner who was expected on a visit to Mr. Darcy, and it instantly struck me that as he was such a friend of the man your husband was so bitterly annoying, and as he appeared to be such a terrible personage in Mr. Krummacher's eyes, it was only doing my duty to my client to warn him of the fact of the intimacy between the young men; and the effect produced by the information proved that I was right. He trembled, as if he were about to sink into the ground, and implored me in quite an abject manner to drop all proceedings against Mr. Darcy, and by no means to exasperate him in any way; he told me to beg his pardon in his name, and to say that he would sign any agreement about anything, no matter what; he would kiss his feet, he would be his slave, if he would but promise not to expose him to the ill-will of that awful Marcellus; in short, for a man who was too strong-minded to be afraid of the devil, he appeared as superstitiously terrified at this man as one could possibly imagine."

"And I cannot wonder at it," said Pauline, shuddering, "for this young Count comes of a terrible race, and one greatly to be feared, if any family ever was. Of the present head I know nothing, except

that he is an excellent soldier, and a great favourite at Court ; but his very name is enough for me. You may just as well live amid the united horrors of war, pestilence, and famine, as carry on an unequal strife with that fearful house. No man ever flourished after incurring their hostility ! and truly might it be said of them, as of their ancestral foe, Atila the Hun, that no grass will grow again where the angry tread of an Aurantius has ever fallen."

"Yet if I have been rightly informed," rejoined Whiting, in a sneering tone, "it has not been a very flourishing family of late years. I had some dealings with an agent of theirs not so very long ago, who was raising money for them, and their affairs did not appear to have much of the luck which proverbially belongs to the devil's chicks. If they are such folks as you say, it is rather strange that they should have fallen into comparative poverty and political ruin."

"It does appear so," replied Pauline ; "but however this apparent contradiction may be accounted for, of the fact there is no doubt, that this family have exercised the most extraordinary and mysterious influence over all that came in contact with them, and that ill-fortune haunts all who are opposed to them. It is true that they are not themselves always fortunate, and that they have been the last stay of a falling cause far more frequently than the champions of the triumphant dynasty, so that many a time their house has seemed buried in the ruins of the party they espoused ; but as individuals, their chiefs have ever been men to be feared and courted, and the force of the proud warning, 'Beware the grip of the wounded lynx,' has been fearfully verified by all those who have had any share in injuring them. From that almost fabulously remote period of their history, when as the petty kings of a Spanish tribe they were gifted with

lands and honours by Scipio Africanus, in return for their unflinching fidelity to Rome during the terrible catastrophes of the early years of the Second Punic war ; through the long and troublous border-struggles of the Imperial colonies on the Danube against the Dacians, and the subsequent invasion of the Huns ; through the fluctuating vicissitudes of the warfare of the Crescent and the Cross ; in the grand levy to aid Maria Theresa ; in the undaunted array against Napoleon, when all seemed lost ; up to the last gallant though unfortunate attempt to recover national independence, this extraordinary family has always supplied hearts of the sternest courage, heads of the coolest prudence, and hands of the most pre-eminent military skill to every banner which they followed ; and as far as I can judge, the prestige of the house is not likely to suffer any diminution in the hands of him who is now its head. Well may Karl dread this youth, and I fully believe you when you say that if ordered by him to drop his proceedings against my first husband, he will do so to a certainty ; but at the same time, permit me to say, that I shall not desist from prosecuting my cause, and as I am a person concerned, which you seem to forget, the matter cannot be hushed up without my consent. Now Karl Krummacher, unluckily for his new change of policy, has put into my hands the stone to hold over Darcy's head, and with me it rests to let it fall, and not with him, as you seem to think."

"But if you so dread this foreign nobleman, I wonder you are not afraid of the rock falling upon the wrong head ; according to your own showing it might prove a rather inconvenient stone to you !"

"Not in the least," answered Pauline, laughing heartily ; "if the anger of Marcellus Aurantius is aroused it will be all the better for me."

"How so?" demanded the astonished Whiting; "what can you mean?"

"I mean this," said Pauline, grinning: "you English talk of killing two birds with one stone, and that is what my stone will achieve in that case."

"Oho! that's what you're after, is it!" gasped the lawyer; "a nice wife you are! so you think it no great drawback to your schemes that your husband will smart for it."

"Karl Krummacher is not my husband, and as it is by his vile treachery that I have been so cruelly deceived, he has only himself to blame if I claim the protection of him who really is so, without consulting the safety or convenience of such a villain. To tell the truth, I am expecting Darcy almost every minute, for I sent him a note requesting an interview, and assigning such reasons for his obeying the summons, that I think I can hardly fail in bringing him here. And as my messenger was directed to seek him wherever he might be, and to place the letter in his own hands, it cannot well have missed coming into his possession by this time. So, as I wish to have a few minutes to myself, to sort certain papers before my interview with him, I must beg leave to close our conversation for the present, assuring you that I will not forget your services if I am successful in my project, however deaf to your good advice I may now appear."

Whiting performed a warlike flourish of trumpets through the agency of a yellow silk handkerchief, like some baffled general retreating from before the walls of an impregnable fortress, anxious even in repulse to keep up the semblance of defiance; but finding the lady disinclined to enter into further parley, he evacuated his trenches, and left the room. Pauline then drew from her desk a large sheet of very dirty, mud-

stained paper, which bore evident marks of hard usage, and great journeyings in pockets and purses, to judge at least by its worn creases, where it had been folded, which were patched up with paper pasted behind them, and where a line here and there had plainly enough been renewed, long after the body of the manuscript had been written. Its contents, at first sight, might easily have been mistaken for a loose page of a student's exercise-book, containing words and expressions committed to writing after a search in the lexicon, or, in other portions, for the lucubrations of her grandsire, the astrologer, as hieroglyphics of various quaint forms appeared therein resolved to their legitimate meanings; but dirty and rumpled as that paper was to outward view, and insignificant beyond all description as it seemed to a person ignorant of its value, it was, to those who knew how to use it, a document of the most fearful importance, consigning many a family to misery, rivetting on the limbs of many a prisoner, now joyously expecting the end of his term of imprisonment, the chains of life-long servitude, staining many a loyal name with the proofs of treason, and showing how disaffection had lurked wellnigh upon the steps of the Imperial throne. It was a key to the cipher in which certain letters were written, which still remained unread in the hands of the authorities at Vienna, and which only needed that one sheet of paper to be converted into warrants of death and woe to many a luckless house. Three years had those fatal letters remained undeciphered, and the bitterness of death seemed past, the storm-cloud had to all appearance floated over and cast down no withering bolt; but now, in the far-distant western isle, in an obscure room, handled by a weak and unscrupulous girl as a means to attain her own selfish ends, the dreaded engine of destruction

once more comes to light, and the destiny of hundreds again trembles in the balance.

How astonished many of us would be to hear beforehand the nature of the dangers beneath which we are fated to sink at last! how improbable, how absurdly undignified they would often appear, how unwillingly we should confess that such an end might yet be ours! "Show us," we cry to the lord of the magic mirror, "the closing scene of the eventful life of yon gallant warrior, so proud, so full of military ardour, so fit a subject for the dirge of the bard relating a hero's death on the blood-stained field of strife." Breathlessly we watch the gathering shadows as they gradually steal mistily over the polished surface, and form themselves into shape, taking for granted that our eye will fall on some splendid pageant of all the pomp and circumstance of glorious war. But what do we really see? A wizened little old man, scudding before the wind on a stormy day in October, and a white gander chasing him over the common, savagely grabbing at those poor emaciated legs—it gives him a vicious bite with its outstretched bill, and he turns round and salutes it in return with a hearty kick. The shadows melt away, and behold our eyes have beheld the coveted tableau of how "this day a prince hath perished in Israel." Or, if we would know the one great peril of our own life, the magic mirror shows us a bricklayer setting a new grate in our bedroom, and our careful housekeeper superintending the firmness of the work. A knock is heard; Mrs. Scarebabe is suddenly called away; Stubbs, delighted with the prospect of escaping the worrying lectures of that worthy dame, hurries over his work, and triumphantly finishes it before she returns. Home come we after a dinner-party, and pull off a tight boot by means of the top bar of the grate; down it falls in thunder on

our shin ; we limp into bed and have a very bad night, send for the doctor in the morning, who in his turn sends for our lawyer in the afternoon, the parson in the evening, and our married children by electric telegraph at night. So verifying in sad earnest the prognostications of our maiden aunt, made in the merry heyday of youth and puppydom, "that those dress-boots would be the destruction of us ;" we make a Christian end, and our eldest hope, Tom Payne Russell Cobden Kossuth reigns in our stead.

And just as little could the victims of such deadly peril as the writers of the letters to which Pauline held the key, have guessed, even if they had been present at Leila's ball, upon what an apparently trivial matter their fate was hanging. All they would have seen would have been a very artistic and well-conducted flirtation, which, when properly managed, is a goodly and joyous sight to watch, and no suspicion would have crossed their minds of their own deep interest in the scene before them, and how every smile of Florence was strengthening the resolves of that stern arbitress of their destiny, who now held their fate in her hands, while every shade on Phil's face, when his greedy passion experienced some fancied check from the maiden coyness of his beloved, lessened their peril, and restored compunction and humanity to their natural position in the breast of that scrutinizing observer of every movement of the enamoured pair.

Yet so it was, and upon Florence's reception of Philip Darcy on that eventful night depended the interests of whole families, more than a thousand miles from the scene of action. But I must leave off moralizing upon events of which the reader will soon be better informed, and open the hall-door to that violent ring, which is echoing throughout the thin walls of the spider's home.

CHAPTER XI.

DARCY LOSES HIS QUEEN, AND PLAYS FOR A STALEMATE.

"You have been pleased to summon me in great haste, Madame Krummacher," said Philip Darcy, as he entered the room, and bowing rather frigidly over the extended hand of the lady without taking it, seated himself by the window, as if foreseeing the convenience of having a place of refuge for his eyes during some part of the ensuing debate; "you have not explained to any very great nicety the nature of your proposed communication, but as you said enough to convince me of the propriety of learning more, I have acceded to your request of a meeting without hesitation."

"And you have done well," replied the lady, "for this is no matter to be trifled with. My messenger found you at the Manor House, I presume—at least I told him to go straight there, if he did not find you at the Priory. But you have kept me waiting a very long time."

"He did find me at the house you mention, Madame Krummacher," answered Darcy, coldly; "but as the footman to whom your note was given very properly declined bringing me letters into the drawing-room of another gentleman, it was not delivered to me until I was mounting my horse to leave, otherwise I should have been here earlier."

"What a pretty book the Phantom Ship is," quoth Pauline, in a sham brown study, "at least I thought so when you read it to me in Scotland, although you

did not care for it much, I remember. What an excellent scene that was, where Philip and Amine were sitting so lovingly together in their little cottage at Terneuse, when that one-eyed pilot, Schriften, came to wake them from their fool's Paradise, and pack off poor Philip to his goose-chase after his father, to be kicked and thumped about in the world, instead of looking at himself in Amine's great eyes. Was not the story well told?"

"Certainly," said Phil, looking her calmly and firmly in the face, "it was well told, and the misery of those two poor creatures must have been bitter indeed. But I must not confine myself to praising that one scene, but give my heartiest applause to the talent displayed in depicting the high and lofty soul which influenced those unfortunates throughout their whole task of stern duty, and caused them never to waver or faint in prosecuting that search, which both felt must not be given up from fear of evil, or temptation of present pleasure. Amine did not hold back him she so fondly loved from the inevitable sorrows of the path he had chosen—hers was not the devotion which enervates or debases, but which purifies and exalts—so, weepingly and desolately, yet bravely and without murmuring, she blessed him and let him go; and even so will the lofty purity of Florence Montgomery comfort and support, not weaken, as you erroneously imagine, the honour of poor Philip Darcy. Listen to me, Pauline," he continued, after a short pause, "I will give you a new answer to a very old riddle, which I trust you will take to heart: What is smaller than a mite's mouth? the usual solution is, a mite's tooth, but mine is 'petty malice,' and I think it a great improvement."

"I quite agree with you," returned his companion; "and if I have any scheme of retribution in my mind,

rest assured that it will not be a petty one, however blameable it may be in other respects. But we are only wasting time and good-humour by quarrelling, just when it is most desirable that we should be perfect friends. I have a fancy for the bare name and standing of your wife—a very silly object of ambition I dare say, but one for which I have my reasons. You, on the other hand, refuse me that name, for which you doubtless have yours. We neither of us care to live together, and as for money matters, of course I know that we can, as you have often suggested, manage them perfectly well without the marriage; so thus far we are upon tolerably equal grounds, and it might perhaps appear a matter of very little consequence whether the union take place or not. But, however amicably we may agree upon these little details, upon the main question we are still at issue, and as you pertinaciously refuse to do me justice, I must now right myself by any means in my power.”

“Do you justice!” exclaimed Darcy, angrily; “what justice do I owe you, Pauline? am not I the cruelly wronged and unjustly used, and you the scheming and false-hearted persecutor? This affectation of believing in the truth of your story is mere folly between ourselves.”

“Folly or not, Philip Darcy, it is very necessary; for if I tell two different tales, and look on a thing in two different lights, according to what company I am in, I shall run no little risk of being caught tripping some day, from not sufficiently remembering my own tragical history; so, if you please, I will continue, even when speaking to you, to call myself the injured person, just to keep my hand in, as you English would say. Besides which, it will soon be over now, either one way or the other, for one of the wishes you so frequently expressed in your letters is on the very verge

of accomplishment, and the final decision of how the matter is to end will be given this very evening, and by yourself. You remember the family of Rodelein, I presume"—Darcy started from his seat in terrified amazement—"and you are under great obligations to them?"

"Yes," replied he, in a hollow voice, "for them I must—nay, most cheerfully will—surrender all that is dearest to me, life and happiness included. But what of them? they are prosperous, and honoured, and even wealthy, according to their own modest idea of riches, and live in peace and domestic comfort in their own land, by the hearths of their fathers."

"Are you not aware," recommenced Pauline, "that a letter from the head of that house to Arthur Görgei is still in the hands of the Imperial government, although they have as yet been baffled by the clever cipher in which it is written?"

"But that cipher never can be divulged except by direct treachery," said Darcy. "The general to whom it was sent could not himself have read it, without my assistance, and the figures, which represent the most important interests, are referable only to certain affairs of my own, so exclusively personal that no human ingenuity could detect the connexion."

"But supposing this treachery was to be exercised, how then?" asked Pauline.

"Nay, my fair friend," replied Philip smiling, "if you intend playing the *Cædipus* to my riddles, I think I may pretty safely defy you. The key, so simple when its principle is once understood, is founded upon such an intimate knowledge of my own private affairs at home, that no stranger could possibly get at it. So we will not argue upon this position just at present."

"Well, I will give you one specimen of my art," said Pauline, "and by that you may form a pretty

fair opinion of my powers. Numbers 3, 40, and 61, mean Emmeric Aurantius; 9, 14, and 25, Hermann Rodelein; 26 the ex-emperor, 30 the present, and 62 the Ban of Croatia. Has my character as an expounder of secrets risen at all in your eyes, most self-sufficient builder of fortresses out of eggshells?"

"Very ingenious, indeed, Madame Krummacher," returned Darcy, assuming an air of raillery so natural, that even his companion was half-staggered in her belief, "very clever indeed! but like many other theories, more laudable for its ingenuity than its correctness. What made you come to this conclusion?"

"What you very properly call at once a simple, yet most improbable line of connexion, Philip Darcy! I find in Leila Mainwaring's collection of curiosities, a quantity of things ticketed by numbers, most of which once belonged to you, and upon which the old labels yet remain, and consulting her catalogue, also copied word for word from yours, I discovered the following entries:—Nos. 3, 40, 61, are all relics given you by members of the Aurantian family, not including your present friend Marcellus, or in some way relate to them; Nos. 9, 14, 25, all have some reference to Hermann Rodelein; 26 is a piece of cloth used at the coronation of the late Emperor; 30 alludes so complimentarily to Francis Joseph, that I can hardly doubt the figure represents him, and 62 is a spur belonging to the Ban of Croatia. Now Karl Krummacher has a key to most of the rest, but was quite baffled, I candidly own, by your figures, which, however, I managed to supply by reference to my darling little pupil's museum. When he first told me the nature of his difficulties, a sudden thought struck me, and upon trying an experiment or two, I discovered that it worked to admiration, and that by

knowing the fact that the same person was denoted by two or three different numbers, and what those numbers were, I could surmount the greatest obstacle to the comprehension of the whole, viz., the most puzzling amount of figures, which had hitherto been taken, as a matter of course, to signify separate persons or things. So I found a letter, a copy of which was in Karl's possession, with the offer of a handsome reward to decipher it, as easy to read as a common newspaper by means of his key to part, and my knowledge of the triple numbers, under which certain personages were mentioned, for the rest. The secret of my information on this head has never been breathed to a soul, and, as your wife, it would be alike my duty and my pleasure to obey your wishes. You can make me as docile as any trained spaniel if you choose, for my love would soon return in all its force if you were kind to me, or you can make me your uncompromising enemy. You have your choice, and you must make your selection before you leave this room. I should have wished to give you more time, but I dare not; you would use the interim in warning the Rodeleins and others to fly, and the greatest hold I have on you would be lost. I must call upon you then to decide, once for all, whether you will save your friends or not—for if you quit this house to-night without a direct promise to acknowledge my claims, the first train to-morrow morning takes me to town, and the key is with the ambassador before twenty-four hours from this time."

In vain did poor Phil lavish appeals of the most extravagant kind to her ambition or avarice, and offer to strip himself of wealth, and even competence, to obtain the reversal of the one demand, for which alone she seemed to care; all was in vain, and the only grace she would grant him was a week to consider of

it, conceded after much demur upon his solemn word to give no warning to the parties concerned, during the armistice. Nor would he have gained even thus much consideration, had not Pauline been duly conscious that she must trust him to some extent, and that after all with a young man of his disposition, it might be as well to repose implicit confidence in him, inasmuch as if he were faithless enough to break his word in one instance, he might do so in the other also, and not own to the marriage after all. Nor could either threats or persuasions induce him to perform his part of the contract first, but he insisted on delaying his surrender until steps had been taken to rescue at least the Rodeleins from all danger, by the sale of their property and the safe convoy of their persons to England, or by an unconditional pardon for all past political offences, which might, as he confidently hoped, be obtained without any great difficulty through the good offices of Marcellus Aurantius.

Having agreed upon this suspension of arms he rushed back to the Priory, as I before described, and was shocked to find from his friend that his hopes of an unconditional amnesty being extended to those unfortunate creatures were utterly vain, and that little remained but to give way to Pauline, or let the full torrent burst on the heads of those to whom he was bound by every tie of gratitude and esteem.

"But how will all this affect poor dear Florence?" groaned he, bitterly; "I could bear the terrible sacrifice which duty demands, were the pain only my own, but I shudder when I think of her. I cannot doubt that she loves me as tenderly as the softest nature and gentlest disposition in the world can love, unworthy as I am of such an honour, and what will she, what can she think if I give her up to conciliate Pauline? the thought seems to madden me. Yet have I life or

any possession whatsoever which ought not to be freely at the disposal of Hermann Rodelein in his need? Am I not bound to lay down all to save him from destruction? By my word, if I hoped that the Emperor would accept my life for his, I would cheerfully surrender it, write a farewell to Florence, make my last bow to Pauline with a smile of scornful defiance, and die as becomes the chosen friend of Marcellus Aurantius. But all this is mere childishness. What can be done at this terrible conjuncture?"

"Let three days pass over without any further steps," replied Marcellus, "and let me see what can be done with Karl Dolchein, and that king of the galley-slaves, Prince di Capello. Affairs are not quite desperate yet, and to die of terror is the silliest death you can choose. The last Marcellus Aurantius went to his grave about a hundred and fifty years ago, at the age of eighty-six, and a very prosperous man, despite of having been on three separate occasions within a few minutes of death by drowning, hanging, and flaying; and although he suffered during his life losses which would go far towards equalling the value of the whole kingdom of Hungary, he managed to make a good job of it somehow, and died in his bed amid the lamentations of his people, and the triumphant rejoicings of the Abbot of Neunkirchen, who gleefully remarked that his Satanic majesty would have enough to do now in repressing insubordination at home, without meddling with foreign aggression. And, seriously speaking, there is no doubt that the influence of that extraordinary man was mainly owing to the stern will with which he surmounted all obstacles, and that had he tamely yielded to the difficulties with which he was continually beset, he must have been utterly ruined very early in life. Cheer up, Philip! you have a good chance yet, for you may rest assured that I will

spare no pains to serve you; go to town on the business of which you told me this morning, relating to your friend Mrs. Burton; exert yourself usefully and honourably in freeing her from her troubles, and defer your mournful sacrifice until it be more clearly seen whether it be indispensably necessary to make it."

To which sound advice Darcy rendered a hearty assent, and the friends parted.

CHAPTER XII.

A FALSE PROPHET GIVES VERY SOUND ADVICE.

It was past midnight, and all was silent throughout the house of Colonel Mainwaring, save in the room allotted to Marcellus Aurantius, in which an animated conference was being carried on between that gallant warrior and the object of his admiration, Prince di Capello, which appeared likely to be prolonged to an indefinite period, so steadfastly was each speaker purposed not to yield a single inch to the arguments of the other.

"I think it rather strange," said the Italian, in his native language, "that after causelessly insulting me at dinner to-day, and doing all that lies in your power to injure and humble me, you should now come to me for aid, and ask my assistance in bringing round to your terms a person whom you yourself confess to be beyond your reach without my interposition. Men do not usually expect favours from those whom they ill-use, or demand friendship in return for insolence and abuse; but you, on the contrary, seem to think all this very reasonable, and profess to be quite amazed at my looking on the matter in a rather different light."

"I certainly wonder most unfeignedly at your even pretending to regard anything in any other light than that of servile timidity, or mercenary greediness, I must confess," returned Marcellus, haughtily, "nor do I by any means despair of even yet bringing you round to my way of thinking. I never opened my

lips to insult you, until you presumed to speak most disrespectfully of my Imperial master, and even when I did laugh at you, it was more to show you that I was not one of your dupes, and to give you a hint of what you might expect if you had the impudence to persecute Miss Darcy with your attentions, than from any ulterior intention of carrying my contempt for you into open hostility. But I now desire to speak to you upon grounds of mutual convenience, and although, of course, in offering you any advantages I am simply acting upon the same principles as those which induce men to rear and feed the animals of whose labour or produce they have need, yet it would be an act of incredible folly on your part to refuse a good chance of bettering yourself, merely because he who offers it to you is no great admirer of your ancestral virtues. Now, you are a very cowardly and ferocious fellow, and as such an excellent tool in more ways than one, otherwise you had not been this side the Styx at this present speaking, I can assure you; and as I happen to have a profound detestation of both bloodthirstiness and timidity, you and I are not very congenial spirits; but that need not prevent our having a common object for a short time. I am, therefore, of opinion, that it is such an unexpected windfall of good fortune for you, to be able to serve a man like me, that I cannot conceive your motives for delaying to take my instructions, and to act upon them, without keeping me up any longer. But as I cannot be deprived of my rest to humour your obstinacy, I beg to lay before you my ultimatum, to which I assure you I shall most scrupulously adhere. I require you to procure from a certain Karl Dolchein a paper of some importance of which he has become possessed, and also to give me an undertaking to make common cause with me against the said Dolchein for

the space of six months, to punish him for any act of disobedience to such orders as I may think fit to issue, and to spare no kind of compulsion in your power to bring him to my terms. And upon these conditions I pledge you my word of honour never to divulge a certain little adventure in which we once met at Venice, which might prove an awkward affair, as also sundry other trifling eccentricities of yours at Berlin, Vienna, Brussels, Paris and London. You see that the lynx has excellent eyes, and good ears too, though divers learned fools have put upon record that it is hard of hearing; but of the fallacy of this opinion you are in a fair way of judging before long, unless you speedily repent your impertinent obstinacy, and save, not exactly your soul, for that is a very light matter in your opinion, but your rascally life. Nor will I interfere in any way between you and Alderman Pigwiggin, whose sixty thousand pounds you are now attacking through his lovely daughter, though you must drop the siege of Miss Darcy without delay. And I will furthermore promise only to laugh in some very obscure corner, when I hear a glowing description of your domains in your native land. The warrior upon turtles and game of whom I spoke is no ally of mine, and I care nothing for him or his fat Juliana; he is a very liberal principled man and very fond of patriots! so, if he likes them, by all means let him have enough of them—a satiety which he will speedily attain, with the blessing of such a son-in-law. But if you refuse, then war to the knife begins between us, and all your history will be duly published in less than a week amongst those who will make your residence in England, France, Belgium, Germany, and the Empire, rather an unpleasant one; and farewell to Miss Pigwiggin and her money-bags, which, if report speaks true, are as plump as herself. I put

to you then, as a mere matter of policy, whether you wish to quarrel with me, but cannot trouble myself with talking to you any longer. I can manage Karl Dolchein myself somehow, I have no doubt, but for certain reasons it will suit me far better to have recourse to your agency. And now, good night! and may your dreams be happy ones of every coarse and foul dissipation in which you love to wallow! so shall the prospect of exchanging the means of enjoying yourself for the galleys or the scaffold be doubly disagreeable to you!"

With these words he dismissed the Italian to his own roost, and seating himself in a chair, put on his considering-cap to settle his future plan of action in a very discontented frame of mind.

"If that contemptible little viper did but know what insufficient proofs I could bring against him, if I were to attempt to substantiate my charges," thought he, "he might well set me at defiance, but that he evidently does not. I hardly know how to go to work with him after all, and yet I think he will make a much better agent with that Karl Dolchein than I should myself, for those two worthies are bound together by that strongest of all ties, the rope that hangs them both; besides which, it is scarcely possible for me to put sufficient screw upon my friend Karl, without running great risk of its being misinterpreted by my countrymen into being a relentless persecutor of the national party, which I am not, and which I desire above all things to avoid seeming. I think my threat about Alderman Pigwiggin and the sixty thousand pounds was the most telling part of my speech, and I really can do him a bad turn there, but it goes against all my feelings to stand between the democratic, turbulent old candle-maker, and the well-merited punishment of his reckless encourage-

ment of all the vilest scum of society, which seems, by some extraordinary freak of fortune, to be invariably thrown up on the shores of England; as though, instead of the noblest and most intellectual country in the world, which with all its follies and scoundrel-worship it really is, it were a kind of cinder-heap for the rest of Europe. How strange it is that I should have wanted to keep this fellow here for a day or two, in order to get a little information respecting the secret societies in Italy out of him, and that all of a sudden he should turn out of use in another direction. But the thing is how to work upon him the most effectually. Stay, he is inordinately timid and superstitious. I wonder whether we could try a little supernatural intervention with him? such things have been attended with excellent success before now. Anyhow it is worth trying, for it can do no harm if it fails. But what shall be the nature of the apparition? the devil is far too common in Italy, besides which, my own ancestors had too much to do with him in reality, for it to be very pleasant for me to play at imitating him. I have an equal dislike to any masquerading in the guise of saints, or of our Lady, otherwise Miss Darcy would do for the Madonna capitally, and would, I presume, readily aid in a scheme for saving her brother from so much misery; but then she is not well enough acquainted with Italian, which is indispensable. By my word, I have it!" said he, after a little pause; "I remember to have heard that the only time when this rascal was ever known to evince the slightest signs of penitence, was after fancying in some illness that the spirit of his sister, who died when she was about sixteen, had appeared to him, and warned him of the inevitable consequences of pursuing the life he was then leading, and that he did really forswear both dice and wine for some weeks

after his recovery. Nothing can be easier than to dress up Leila to personate the ghost, and as she speaks Italian with a very tolerable accent, and I trust that the Prince will be too terrified to be very critical, I dare say we shall manage it well enough; at any rate it is better than nothing, for it is very clear that, for some reason or other, he is very unwilling to quarrel with Karl Dolchein, and I am equally averse to dealing with him myself."

Much did Marcellus muse over his plan as he lay in bed that night, and at that contemplative hour when he was dressing in the morning, and the more he revolved it, the fairer appeared the hope that by this plot he might contrive to fathom more than one of those little mysteries, in the solution of which he took all the hereditary pleasure of his family, who, as the reader has already learnt from Pauline, were famous through many generations for receiving gossiping visits from the fowls of the air.

Leila, you may be sure, was delighted at being selected as his accomplice in a plot combining mystery, fun, and thrilling interest in the event; and being perfectly persuaded that she was undertaking the part of a kind of guardian angel to her old playfellow, Darcy, in her present masquerade, devoted all her best energies to getting herself up for her part, and diligently rehearsing the lessons given her by Marcellus, so that by the time another night arrived, the play was quite ready for performance, and the actors merely waited for the midnight hour to commence their melodramatic performance.

Nothing could exceed the amenity of the whole family towards the illustrious foreigner during the entire day, for even Marcellus had appeared more polite towards him, which Capello set down to fear of offending him; Mrs. Darcy had called to take him out

for a drive; and Alderman Pigwiggin had sent him a card of invitation to a great ball, enclosed in a letter from Juliana Florestina herself, gently urging him to come; in fact, all the world seemed to smile upon him; and although it was not entirely without apprehension that he remembered the threats of his antagonist in the conference of the previous night, yet he consoled himself with the idea that he might yet keep the Hungarian in check until his happy marriage with Miss Pigwiggin, and that after that ceremony his father-in-law would, as a mere matter of course, exert himself to shield his daughter's husband from exposure and disgrace.

And perhaps I may as well mention here, that although Gaetano di Capello was a rascal, a blackleg, a swindler, and a double-faced traitor, selling the victims of his own wicked political incendiarism to the authorities without the slightest scruple or compassion; and although Marcellus had not exaggerated the truth when he taunted him with not being wholly inexperienced in life at the galleys, yet that he really was a man of very noble extraction, and in sober earnest what he represented himself to be, Prince di Capello.

The son of an eccentric, art-loving old Prince, who, poor almost to beggary, retained to his death one of the finest galleries of paintings in the world, which he himself, disguised as a servant of the palace, was accustomed to exhibit to the wandering visitors from other lands, for the little fees which he could thus contrive to appropriate for his own pressing necessities, Gaetano di Capello had led from his earliest childhood the vagabond life of a penniless patrician, living upon his wits, and picking up a precarious subsistence by his skill and roguery at the public gaming tables. To this honourable profession he had added of late years that of a secret informer and spy upon the various

revolutionary societies of his native peninsula, of all of which he was to open seeming a most devoted and enthusiastic member. In fact, he practised with tolerable success as a kind of dealer in political game, and would supply a customer to order with a Milanese, a Roman, or a Neapolitan, or, at a correspondingly higher price, even a Frenchman or a Hungarian, at the shortest notice, and in a most satisfactory manner. In some instances, indeed, he followed the example of certain breeders of fancy poultry, and would only supply his produce dead, and in some very rare ones, he declined either killing or catching his best-laying hens, which, being interpreted, means those conspirators who made most work for him; and though no less a personage than Marcellus Aurantius had offered him ten thousand florins to obtain him the honour of a private interview with a certain distinguished hero, whose sacred name we will not publish in the streets of the profane, he very wisely thought that he should eventually get more out of the prolonged life of that piece of revolutionary leaven, which in every conceivable disturbance all over Europe is sedulously striving to excite as much confusion as possible, so he respectfully declined accepting our friend's offer. Not that I mean that a gallant soldier like Marcellus had any idea of enacting Brutus to the Cæsar of the human mushroom in question, but simply that he had a sort of equity suit with him, which, hating the intervention of lawyers as he did, he thought had better be "settled out of court by arbitration!" In fact, proceeding upon the principle of that beautiful Yellow verdict, that King Charles the Martyr was put to death by the only law he himself had left in the land, the fiery Hungarian purposed to refer their little differences to the ordeal of battle, as being the only effectual means of justice then left him by the machinations of his

enemy, and to force his antagonist to come to trial whether he would or not, being steadfastly purposed to take care that his ancestral coronet, were it never again to deck his own brow, at any rate should never bedizen that of the charlatan by whose intrigues it had been jeopardized; and being well aware that the modern "Father of his country" did not at all resemble Sir Godfrey Kneller in "being very fond of gunpowder." But Capello either could not or would not undertake to arrange the meeting, which consequently was delayed for upwards of three years, until they accidentally fell in with one another, about three months after the time of which I am now writing, in a most meek-minded manner, on the stairs of the British Museum, and duly appreciating the inutility of crying over spilt milk, Marcellus stalked gloomily past his foe, and buried his sorrows in the contemplation of the African babyroussa in the central saloon.

But to return to our black sheep. What with dealing in assassins, swindling, and gambling, the noble scion of Italian royalty might have made a considerable fortune; had not his unbounded profligacy wasted all his resources as fast as they came in, and left him in a few weeks after some successful villany as poor as ever, and as bankrupt in purse as in character. He had performed a very tolerable starring tour through England, as the gallant enemy of foreign usurpation on the sacred soil of Italy, and had drawn tears of enthusiasm, when he described the heroism with which a whole nation renounced tobacco in order to vex the Emperor, from the eyes of several honest gentlemen, who would nevertheless have cut off the heads of their sons with a boiled-beef knife, or at the very least their hopes of inheritance with a shilling, had they caught those misguided youths expressing the least hankering after that filthy weed, which it

was such godlike self-sacrifice on the part of the men of Milan to lay aside at the call of patriotism.

Old Pigwiggin was charmed with his abuse of everything half an inch high, and above all with his indignant invectives against a degenerate aristocracy, which indeed were very high-minded of him, as tending to show how little self-love reigned in that disinterested bosom; and as for Juliana Florestina, her heart was as roast-meat after the burning glances with which he accompanied a love-song of his own sunny land, plaintively thrumming the bellows in lieu of a guitar. He had fallen in with Mrs. Darcy at the house of a lady who was fond of the brute creation—viz., lions, monkeys, puppies, and asses—and greatly courted her friendship, in accordance with the opinion of a Scotch nobleman who introduced him, to the effect that “there are no fools in Europe as big as those in England;” which remark was meant, I fancy, to refer to the chickens he was carving at the time, but was applied with equal justice by Prince di Capello to Mrs. Darcy and Alderman Pigwiggin, with which latter gentleman he had then been residing as *enfant de la maison* for several weeks.

As to marrying Julia, he was rather undecided on that head, having a pretty shrewd idea of the improbability of her brother consenting, without an investigation into his affairs and good fame, which would not quite meet his own views; while to humbug so old a hand as himself for very long with her mother’s rhodomontade and empty boastings was only to be hoped for when weazels were to be caught in troops in a state of somnolency. Added to which, the young lady evinced no signs of being enchanted, and for a foreigner without either money or connexion to carry on a successful suit against all the best matches of the beau monde with a lady-love worse than passively indifferent to the attractions of

her admirer is a hard struggle indeed. In short, the poor Prince experienced the full force of a sage remark I myself once heard made on the futility of setting a mouse-trap in the store closet, viz., that amid so many good things which were not guarded, it must be indeed a sheer fatality that could make the unhappy visitor select for his repast the bait that was, and that the chances must remain in *sæcula sæculorum*, infinitely in favour of the mouse, and against the Kammerjäger, as the Germans grandiloquently style a rat-catcher.

And thus fared it with poor Capello, since, with dozens of excellent offers within her reach, what should impel Julia to accept a miserably bad one? and if she did not wish to marry him, who on earth was there to lift up a finger to make her? But this argument did not hold good with the fair descendant of many Pigwiggins, inasmuch as the damsel herself was very favourable to his suit, and the fat father was enchanted with his eloquence—not that he understood a tenth part of his meaning, owing to the broken English of the speaker, and the very limited comprehension of foreign geography and politics of the listener. But where is the leveller, who in private life does not bow down and worship before the shadow of a title? Therefore there was no obstruction in the way of the Prince's love for Juliana the Sleek, and he cultivated Mrs. Darcy simply as the keeper of a gratuitous boarding-house, with some little contingent hope of having a few games at billiards, or even a quiet night or two at vingt-et-un with her son, if a good opportunity occurred, which thing, if fortune would grant unto him, he trusted to put to a good use. Hence his visit in company with madame to Midhampton, where we now find him most contentedly seated in his bed-room at the Priory, cogitating over the possibility

of having the whist-points raised by another night, as it is very slow work making a booty worth mentioning out of shillings, cheat as you will.

"Now, fifteen half-crowns," thought he, disconsolately, as he turned over a half-sovereign and five shillings, lately the property of the Colonel and Mr. Montgomery, "would have been tolerable work for an hour's play amongst these stupid country folks, and some little encouragement for exertion—but shillings! not even two pieces of gold! that is very poor pay indeed. However, I'll see whether I can't get the stakes raised to-morrow night; Captain Devereux is coming, and soldiers generally play for more than mere bonbons like these."

So saying he hopped nimbly into bed, and was soon wrapped in that peaceful slumber, which seems by some freak of nature to belong most pre-eminently to two violent extremes, the most perfect and childlike innocence, and the most hardened and defiant wickedness. Whichever may have been his case, he slept as soundly as if he were never again to wake, till about one o'clock, when a terrific clap of thunder, which seemed to shake the whole house to its foundation, roused him from his dreamless repose, and a flash of lightning of almost intolerable brilliancy showed him a vision standing at the foot of his bed, which caused his hair to bristle, and his brow to start with drops of cold perspiration, so paralysing was his superstitious terror of what he there beheld. His sister once more stood before him, clothed in the virgin white of the cloister, but a wreath of laurel was round her brow and mingled with the long black tresses which streamed over her shoulders; a veil, not of the coarse material of the convent, but of white lace, studded with golden stars, covered her face and neck, and in her hand she carried a wand twined with immortelles, and crowned with a

large white flower, in which a more experienced florist than the Prince would have recognised a *datura*, while the left was hidden in the folds of her dress. She remained silent and motionless for some minutes, the lightning streaming lividly over her unchanging features, till the suspense and terror of the Italian became unbearable, and he would have rushed from his bed and thrown himself at the feet of the vision, had she not waved him back with the mystic wand.

"Once more, brother, and for the last time, we meet," said the apparition, in a low, but distinct voice, and in Italian so pure, that there is little wonder that no suspicion of trickery in so distant a country ever crossed the mind of him to whom she was speaking. "Take this warning in good earnest, for the opportunity may never come again: ere three days be gone a peril dire and fatal awaits you, and unless the tie which binds you to your old companions in evil be effectually severed, no power upon earth can save you. Treachery from one not of your own nation threatens you with speedy destruction; but be bold, break off all connexion with him, and take the initiative in defying him, so shall you be safe, if you are willing to make such reparation as lies in your power for your sins."

"Who is this enemy, Floretta?" asked the trembling Italian, "and from whence does the danger arise? for so many have been my crimes, and so numberless my accomplices in evil, that I cannot decipher the exact danger of which you warn me."

"Did not my heart bleed for you, brother, when your hand was clasped in that of the traitor of the far distant Carpathians?" replied the ghost, taking a chance shot at the fact that Capello had been present at an interview with Dolchien during the day, and hitting the bull's-eye with unerring precision. "Did I not see you

a victim to his superior craft, putting your life into his hands, ignorant of the cruel indifference with which he would cast you aside, after you had served his purpose, like a broken tool."

"And what escape have I?" groaned the unfortunate man; "truly do you say that I have my liberty, nay, perhaps even my very life in his hands."

"Not so, brother," replied the spirit, softly, "cast away his bonds from you; appeal to the generosity of him whose life you once sought in blind hostility; make yourself worthy of his protection by your contrition, and you shall be as safe as though no enemy to your peace existed upon the whole earth. As for the letters which your persecutor may possess, and which may threaten you with danger, be of good cheer regarding them; I have a potent spell to destroy their efficacy to injure you. Arise! lay the corresponding papers before the picture of holy Jerome, which hangs in the room in which you last sate, place above them this flower," and the apparition extended to him the datura from the mysterious wand, "pray to your patron saint during this critical night, and when morning again dawns, seek the picture where you have left your papers, and reconvey them to a place of safety, and thus shall happen to them: as the flower which lies upon your letters from Dolchein and his partners in crime withers and fades away, so shall the ink vanish from your ill-omened communications to that traitor, and the proofs that he trusts in possessing of your complicity with him shall be mere useless sheets of blank and unstained paper. Of the reality of this vision receive an infallible sign, even as with the cool dews I bathe your brow, in token of my hopes of your amendment," and as she spoke she sprinkled a few drops of water from the wand, "so, if you do not believe, and make reparation, do I warn you of coming

evil, and lay upon your forehead the burning brand of remorse for sound advice scorned, and opportunities of retracing the evil past recklessly cast away." With these words she placed her left hand on the cheek of the half delirious Capello, who absolutely fainted with terror, as he felt the fingers scorching his face like liquid fire.

The spirit slowly fell back, with its face to the bed, until it came to the door of a large closet in the farthest corner of the room, which it noiselessly opened by a dexterous use of its hands behind its back, when stepping in and pulling a cord which hung through the ceiling, a trap-door opened, and lifted up by two loops into which she put her feet, while she clung with both hands to the rope, the clever actress mounted into an untenanted room in the attics, and disclosed to the applauding eyes of Julia Darcy and Marcellus Aurantius the smiling face of Leila Mainwaring.

"I think I have played my part extremely well," said she, "and done credit to the confidence you reposed in my ghostly powers. But I fancy I have suffered a little in the wars myself, for the burning liquid I put on my glove has eaten its way right through the kid, and burned a great hole in my unlucky hand, not that it signifies much, considering the excellent job we have made of it. You, Marcellus, must watch at the shrine of Jerome for the letters, while Julia and I retire to repair damages, for my arm aches up to the elbow, to say nothing of my similarity to Cassius in having a very 'itching palm.' By the way, if Shakespeare had been with me a few minutes ago he would never have written

"And who can bear a fire in his hand
By thinking on the frosty Caucasus?"

for really the power of imagination was so strong in me, and I so perfectly identified myself with the spirit I was enacting, that I never felt the burning until it was all over. However, I have done my duty as Phil's wife faithfully to the very last, and hope Florence will fill my place worthily for the future, and 'mix his punch with burned sherry,' when I am gone."

As little Lola finished this burlesque quotation from Major Monsoon, of facetious memory, the glistening tears stood on her dark eyelashes, and a kind of sudden melancholy came over her sunny spirit. And why? who can tell? she had never made a goose of herself about Phil, she had never lavished a thought upon him which need have interfered with his wives, were they as numerous as those of Solomon, and moreover she was beginning to get rather sentimental in another direction! and yet the tears started to her eyes at the idea of being little Lola no longer, and that the merry rollicking careless days of childhood were now fast coming to an end. And certain it is, that although Marcellus bade good night, after this eventful scene, to a merry, clever child, and lavished his praises of her talent and courage in terms of more unrestrained admiration than he would have used towards a young lady whom he considered past the age when we may joke as we like without offence, yet that he sate at breakfast the very next morning by the side of a damsel extremely like the pretty apparition of the preceding night, whom he treated with the profoundest respect, and called Miss Mainwaring, to which name he rigidly adhered until we shall see him in Act V., Scene the last, of this eventful history.

While the ladies retire to rest, and Marcellus is busily engaged with the papers, dedicated to St. Jerome, which afterwards made all Italy and the

empire wonder more and more at the omniscience of this worthy descendant of the mysterious Aurantii, and caused the banded brotherhood of patriots to curse the birds who could neither see, hear, or read anything without posting off in hot haste to retail it to "him who dwelleth at ——," I will explain in brief terms how the beatific vision was contrived, lest I be suspected of attributing to the gallant Count of —— veritable dabbings in the black arts, of which his ancestors had been such staunch patrons, and themselves no mean proficient.

In a large closet communicating with the Prince's bed-room, and usually called the hanging-closet, not because the Colonel was wont to exercise therein the baronial rights of pit and gallows, but because the fair Leila used it to hang at full length certain articles of dress which were on no mortal consideration to be crumpled; in this closet, I repeat, there was a trap-door through the ceiling, by which an entry could be made from an attic overhead, and by means of this it was a matter of little difficulty to make sure of the safe entrance and exit of the celestial visitor. In many respects, the conspirators had to trust a good deal to the fears of the Prince being too great to admit of his being a very scrutinizing critic of the performances, and as we have already seen, Leila had recourse to a chance shot at the proceedings of her victim, which, had it been less correct, might have proved an awkward affair; but they played their game upon the soundest principles of short whist, when the victory is utterly hopeless, except through some happy accident, viz., to run for the only loophole left, with a high-minded indifference to the mere theoretical danger of losing half-a-dozen tricks more or less, when the fatal balance of one is finally and unequivocally decided against you. And by a similar line of rea-

soning, Leila very wisely judged that it did not much signify how signally she was defeated if she were doomed to be defeated at all, in comparison to the advantages to be gained by a successful stroke of genius. And, as the reader will perceive, her ready-witted ingenuity and presence of mind received the reward they deserved.

Julia Darcy had been called in to play propriety, not only by Leila's request, but by the desire of Marcellus himself, who thought it would have been but a very poor return for the Colonel's hospitality, to give the slightest handle to folly or malice, to make a silly story out of his midnight necromancies with the pretty daughter of his kind-hearted host. On being informed of the nature and object of the intended masquerade, it is only to be expected that the sister of Philip Darcy should lend all the assistance in her power to the scheme, and she readily aided in dressing Leila for the part she had to play, heroically suffering her handsomest veil to be bedizened with tinsel stars, and sacrificing a new ball-dress to the conceptions of Marcellus as to the most appropriate apparel for a visitant from the realms of Paradise. When the heavy storm came on, indeed, she was rather urgent that the intended mummerly should be delayed, and wondered much at her companion's willingness to proceed with the matter in hand; an opinion which Marcellus shared to a greater extent than one would readily have imagined, after having heard so much of his cool, undaunted valour on the field of battle, did not all history and experience show us how widely different are the springs of terror of the material and the supernatural. But Leila roughly over-ruled all these objections, and stoutly maintained that the tempestuous howling of the wind and the roaring thunder would tend to prevent an accurate comparison between her voice and

accent, and that of the girl she was personating ; while the lurid lightning would afford sufficient opportunity for seeing the apparition, and for performing her pantomimic actions, without allowing time for the features to be recognized as bearing a suspicious dissimilarity to those of the deceased Floretta di Capello. As to feeling any awe of the lightning, she laughingly maintained that after old Franklin had caught it with a kite, and locked it up in a pickle-bottle, and roasted a chicken with it, for all she knew to the contrary, it had gone quite out of fashion, and become quite commonplace, and as to the fear of its hurting her, fewer people were killed by lightning than died of cutting their fingers, and less than a thousandth part of the geese who laced themselves too tight. Nor did the romantic notion of Marcellus that the thunder was the voice of the Almighty, meet with any more favourable reception from her ; the little maiden remarking with much truth that the gentle breezes of summer and the rippling of the tide were His voice just as much, and that in the dark blue sky and silver stars we may see His ruling hand, no less than in the fiery glow of the electric fluid, so ruthlessly stripped of its adventitious romance by the Yankee philosopher. As may reasonably have been expected, her two companions were too deeply interested in the experiment she was about to make to offer much opposition to her fixed determination ; so wondering from the bottom of his heart how a little damsel, whose slight form seemed scarcely large enough to carry the soul of a mouse, could calmly personate the dead, with the lightning blazing over her face, until he almost fancied her veil was on fire, Marcellus lowered her to her post in the closet, and waited with thrilling suspense till the preconcerted signal was given to lift her again to her expectant companions, when he learnt the joyful tidings

that the plot had succeeded to admiration, and that little fear remained of any obstinacy on the part of the Prince.

Accustomed as Marcellus was to the effects of superstition on the minds of many very hardened villains, even he could hardly believe his eyes, when repairing by Leila's directions to the breakfast-room, he beheld Capello upon his knees before the picture of St. Jerome, weeping and writhing in an agony of terror and remorse, and watched him depositing, with every appearance of reverence, a packet of letters before the feet of the Saint, upon which he laid the datura he had received from the spirit, and after several profound genuflexions departed with a noiseless step to his chamber.

Eagerly did Marcellus seize the papers, and bearing them swiftly away to his room for examination, greedily devour their contents, but much as he had hoped and even expected from the perusal, he had not at all anticipated the mass of startling information which he was now attaining.

"By the graves of my fathers!" muttered he, "but the birds have been communicative to the great-grandson of Aurantius this time! That old physician was quite right on Sunday, when in speaking of Leila he said, 'Rome was saved by geese!' not that my pretty little friend deserves to be called a goose either, for she is cleverer and braver than any girl I ever knew; but great consequences have sprung out of a mere jest. I must be in Vienna by this day week." So saying, he threw himself upon his bed without undressing, and occupied the rest of his waking moments in thinking about the order of Maria Theresa, and what a lucky thing it was that Leila had quarterings enough to attend state-balls at the Imperial Court. And when

at last he fell asleep, his restless dreams were haunted by stars, and marshal's batons, and grand balls, and gay doings of all kinds, in each of which visions Leila introduced her arch little face with the most provoking pertinacity.

CHAPTER XIII.

JACK THE GIANT-KILLER SEEKS THE OGRE IN HIS CASTLE.

WE must now return to Philip Darcy, who, acting upon the advice of his friend Marcellus, had sought to beguile the time which must needs elapse before the plans of the latter could be matured, by undertaking his promised mission to the creditor of the late Mr. Burton, in order to negotiate, if possible, more favourable terms for the poor widow. He arrived in Golden Square, where the nest of the Great Harpy Eagle was built upon the summit of an elevation, to which a flight of steps led the visitants to that fatal dwelling, grinning with a ghastly white upon the dingy street like the skeletons of the victims of the inhabitants, and having ascertained from the brass door-plate that he had reached the place of his destination, rang the bell with a resolute air, but devoutly wishing the interview well over nevertheless. On his name being demanded by a living anatomy, who was a copying-clerk to Mr. Amos Sawdry, he assumed a profound modesty on this subject, and evinced an insuperable objection to give his card, but contrived with some dexterity to leave a strong impression on the mind of the gray-haired jackal who had opened the door, that he was one of the right sort of visitors, viz., a very green, nervous, extravagant young spendthrift. So he gained admittance without delay, and was imprisoned in a back parlour, while Mr. Shaver hobbled off to the room of business to announce the arrival of new booty.

After about five minutes' detention he was released from his captivity, and ushered into the presence of the august Amos, who despite his name had no prophetic forebodings of who his visitant was, and who started with ill-concealed surprise when his eyes fell on the unwelcome vision of the Member for Midhampton. He had grown a great deal younger since we last saw him, and had pale red hair instead of grizzly white, and a most alarming waistcoat and necktie, to say nothing of a boating-shirt of a most gorgeous pattern, and 'O gods and fishes!' such trousers! instead of being arrayed in shiny black, with endless yards of limp muslin twisted round his throat. But with all these drawbacks, he was decidedly improved upon the whole, because although he unquestionably looked less like a man of decent character, he had also lost the appearance of a hypocrite and impostor, and to do him justice showed himself on the present occasion in his true colours. The secret of this transmogrification was, that he had so taken to heart a remark of the reverend gentleman "he sate under," to the effect "that brotherly love begins at home," as to convert himself into his own brother, and had opened a firm of "Sawdry and Sawdry," Saint and Sinner, in London and Midhampton, in which he acted as both partners: first adjuring his friends to shun by all means the paths of the money-lender, which led only unto death, and finally putting them in the way of having their business done, if so it must needs be, and his own poor advice was scorned, on as easy terms as such terrible work admitted of.

"I have a brother," he used to say, "a carnal and grasping man, hard and greedy of gain, I grieve to say, yet honest, according to the honour of the men of this world. He is a stern man of business, I forewarn you, and will have his money without mercy, but at

the same time he is a straightforward dealer, and will charge no more than the usual profits. Pray do not borrow money at all, but if you must, why then Amos is the best person to go to ; and if you give my name, he will show you as much consideration as his nature admits of."

The upshot of which, of course, was that the bulk of those who consulted the Saint of Midhampton, betook themselves to the Sinner of Golden Square, who seldom dealt with them in person, for fear of the remarkable likeness to his brother exciting suspicion, but mostly handed them over to Mr. Shaver, or by that agreeable mode of transfer almost as common among the fraternity to which he belonged, as in a more creditable manner with the medical profession, passed them on to some other shark, taking a lift out of his gudgeons in return. He had hitherto kept up his double identity with great success, as so few persons were likely to be very intimate with him in both departments, and had perfectly hoodwinked Mrs. Burton, who believed in the London brother as profoundly as in the existence of the Income Tax ; but he was doomed to disappointment in his intercourse with Phil, who remembered with fatal accuracy several little peculiarities, both of appearance and manners, which were too striking to belong to different persons, and who recognized far too unmistakeably the Golden Square devil's tattoo with the ruler, in the unctuous thrummings on his broad-brimmed hat of St. Sawdrius of the north country, to be for a moment uncertain about his identity. So he diligently sought for the wart above his left wrist, and the yellow dog's-tooth at one corner of his mouth, and the scar on the top of his head, where an exasperated Guardsman had wellnigh scalped him with a soup-plate, for intruding on a snug *tête-à-tête* dinner at Greenwich with Mademoiselle Parapline, of

Her Majesty's Theatre, and having found them, he made a note of them, *à la* Captain Cuttle, steadfastly purposed to put his knowledge to some fitting use.

By the by, I here beg to say that my worthy friend Phil, for whom I have a great respect, was not himself given to resort to such gentry as the honest-minded Amos, since Samballat himself could not have more bitterly detested Jews of all and every kind ; but being a youth of a very philosophical turn, and fond of zoologically studying his fellow-creatures, he had no objection to be initiated into anything upon the face of the earth, and would go anywhere with anybody, to see something new and read a fresh page in the history of human nature. So when any of his friends wanted a companion in an expedition of any sort, which promised excitement or novelty, Darcy was the man universally selected ; and as his courage and honour were alike above suspicion, he was considered a most invaluable ally in any scrape requiring determination or fidelity. Amongst the many strange entanglements, in which his assistance was required, he was not seldom pressed into the service of unlucky youths, who wanted a sharper wit than their own to cope with the ravenous dog-fish that gaped in all directions to devour them ; and although he very rarely had anything to do with the application for the loans, he was a very knight-errant of the nineteenth century in rescuing the poor wretches who were already in for it, from their merciless foes. And being a rich, daring young fellow, who would expose you as soon as look at you, and face any action with the *nonchalance* of a man inordinately proud of a character high enough to laugh at petty insinuations, and conscious of a good balance at his banker's, if his pocket had to smart for his attack upon the ungodly, he mostly drove his adversaries into a surrender, by dint of his reckless pluck, and had never

failed outright in advancing the interest of those who confided in him. From Amos Sawdry he had rescued bills for some thousands for young Greenhorn of the — Fusileers, by a most audacious plagiarism from the *bon mot* of a legal dignitary of the last generation ; for, upon the land-shark angrily declaring that he would be hanged before he gave them up, Phil blandly remarked—"Very well, Greenhorn can wait till after the execution, if that suits you better ; but I was not aware that" (here he named a certain little affair in which his host was concerned) "was capital ! I fancied it was only transportation, but we can wait."

"Sir !" quoth the enraged usurer, such words are actionable at common-law—beware what you do !"

"Certainly they are, my good sir," said Phil, "but pardon me if I say my counsel, in the civil Court, in defence of your action, will have a brief in the Criminal one as well, I assure you. So do as you like."

But next morning little Greenhorn visited Phil in his bedroom at the Huntingdon, and informed him that old Sawdry had, "metaphorically speaking, shied his bills at his head, and calling him every kind of sneak, blackguard, and cry-baby under the sun, had washed his hands of him and begged him never to darken his doors again." And I am glad to say the little fellow kept, like a man of honour and a gentleman, the word he pledged to Phil, as the sole condition of his assistance, and eschewed such haunts in future ; and that I myself spoiled a bran new hat a few months ago in waving it amongst a hurricane of others in a triumphant crowd, welcoming back in well-merited honour, that brave and gallant officer Captain Norman (he has now taken his mother's name, with a handsome legacy from his maternal uncle), whose unsurpassable courage (for Achilles himself would not be unrivalled in the smallest British garrison) had, throughout the

Crimean campaign, been perfectly equalled by the steadiness and high principle with which he had set an invaluable example to the raw boys who joined his regiment. Nor does it give me less pleasure to record, that in returning thanks for the honour done him by the toast proposed by the Member for Midhampton, at the dinner given him by the gentry of his native county, the voice of the gallant Captain, which had sounded so cheerfully and manfully throughout so many fearful perils and hardships, trembled and fairly broke down, as he mentioned with genuine emotion, the kind assistance, both of money and sound advice, with which Darcy had aided him in retrieving his past follies, and how he owed the happiness of receiving, undimmed by any knowledge of his reckless conduct, the parting blessing of that dear mother, who had since he left her gone to her grave, proud of her son, and in perfect peace of mind. And I confess I differed from Mr. Reddeer, the honourable Member for Shepreth, to the extent of thanking that Providence, who guards my native land, that the "army of lions," which Britannia sent forth to battle, were led by such valorous "asses" as Captain Norman. So I threw my spectacles under the table, for they were as misty as if they were made of ground glass, and roared out in a voice as loud as the fiercest mouse I ever heard, "We have given three times three for the brave soldier, now for nine more for the true-hearted English gentleman!" And they gave it too, I can tell you, till the rafters rang again.

But I really must get back to my story, and to the meeting between Philip Darcy and Mr. Sawdry, which was not without results worth mentioning.

"Good morning, Messrs. Sawdry," said Phil, politely, "I have a little matter of business with both members of your firm, but as my communications with
 mos Sawdry are of the most immediate nature,

I almost think I had better defer what I have to say to Mr. Figs-from-thistles, or whatever your Mid-hampton name may be, till a more convenient occasion."

"I shall be most happy to give you any information about my brother Ezekiel which may lie in my power," responded the man of gorgeous clothing, "but we have few affairs in common. He sends me a client or two every now and then, and occasionally a little game, and I undertake the investment of any small savings he may have, in return, and mostly pack him up a codfish and a barrel of oysters at Christmas, but that is about all. We do not agree in our ideas, and as it is a pity for brothers to quarrel, we seldom meet."

"So I should imagine," said Phil, "and as I said before, brother Ezekiel can wait, unless you happen to be writing to him, and then you can tell him that Philip Darcy means to preach him a practical sermon upon the 'the devil coming amongst you having great wrath,' which will amaze him not a little unless he mends his manners most prodigiously. But now, you perceive, my thrice-honoured friend Amos, I have a commission from Mrs. Burton to you, which, as you men of business would say, lies in a nutshell, as it is simply to inform you that she declines paying you any more money upon that absurd promise, into which you cheated her seven or eight years ago."

"Upon what grounds does she justify her refusal, Mr. Darcy?" asked the astonished Amos; "and what power does she imagine she possesses of granting or denying a fixed annuity, which is as straightforward a piece of legal transfer as railway shares or consols?"

"I will answer your question, Mr. Sawdry, in a very Irish manner, by asking you another—Upon

what grounds do you profess to be entitled to this money, and what power do you pretend to have of enforcing the payment of it?"

"As to the first part of your challenge," said Sawdry, going to a painted deal bureau and bringing out a packet of papers, "you may see with your own eyes Mrs. Burton's agreement to pay this sum; as to the latter, you will find that out, when proceedings are taken to recover my rights."

"And not till then?" laughed Phil; "upon my word, I thought so; that will be the first new moon that happens to fall on Easter Monday, I suppose. If that be all you have to say in defence of the annuity, I will take my leave, and acquaint Mrs. Burton with the fact that the matter is amicably arranged, and that she has saved two hundred a year for the rest of her life."

"Success has puffed you up above your real abilities, I fear, young gentleman," answered Sawdry, coldly. "In the case of young Greenhorn, the rascality of an agent, to whom I entrusted part of my business, cast such an air of discredit over the whole affair that, rather than have my name mixed up in the concern, I restored him bills for which I had given a valuable consideration; weakly, I confess, for I ought to have known that this would lead to further extortions on your part, but at the same time innocently, for I was the victim and you the unprincipled robber. I really must beg you to withdraw, for after your conduct on the occasion of which I last spoke, I can have no more dealings with you."

"Now listen to me, Mr. Sawdry," said Phil, in a firm, impassive voice; "all this bombast is wasted upon me, as entirely as your ridiculous lie about your godly brother at Midhampton; I know that you are

the same man as that venerable gentleman who seconded Augustus Tomnoddy, and upon whom I put an extinguisher on the hustings. Nor do I come to argue on the subject, so if you like to deny it, not a word shall I utter in return, but leave you the onus of disproving my statement, and your remedy at law for my saying so—if you can get it. In precisely the same manner, I beg to announce that Mrs. Burton will not pay a farthing more to you, without having much better cause for doing so than she has at present, and that she will fight out the question to the very last, through her attorney, Mr. Owen, of Lincoln's Inn, who, oddly enough, is mine also. And I have another little thing to mention, which is, that I shall go to Mr. — and Captain —, and one or two other friends of yours, and bet them the whole amount of their bills in your hands against a bottle of claret, that you recover nothing from them, in any court of law, except what you have absolutely advanced and moderate interest, and I am much mistaken if they do not all mutiny, upon the express condition of my paying for them if they lose. And I also beg leave to recommend to your notice a rather well-known fact in the experience of your fraternity, viz., that even if a fellow like you wins his first action, he is always pounded the next five or six, owing to the feelings of the public being worked up to such a pitch of disgust by the revelations therein contained, that they make a pardonable confusion between Lynch law and civil law. In fact, to speak gently of such a matter, you don't get justice, after your ill odour has gone up into the length and breadth of the land, and jurors are very liable to be deaf when the third or fourth case of *Sawdry v. Goosey* is called on, and to bring a pack of cards to play with, and a verdict for the defendant in

their breastcoat pockets. That was a beautiful sentiment of Parson McKenzie—

“ ‘For whoe’er recked, or how, or when
The prowling fox was trapped and slain.’ ”

Ah! your brother told you about that did he? old Mosely was my informant, but it is very true indeed in cases like yours.”

“ I think you have rather mistaken your walk in life, Mr. Darcy,” sneered Amos, turning livid with rage; “ you seem to make a very tolerable rascal yourself, and have a very lively idea of how to cheat honest men, and to shield the worthless and the profligate, despite all your vapourings about honour. But your friend’s dead husband will smart for it in credit, I can assure you, even if you succeed, and from what I know of Mrs. Burton that will not suit her idea of propriety as well as it appears to do yours.”

“ My good sir,” responded Phil, with a contemptuous smile, “ revenge is one of the feelings to which the expression is peculiarly applicable, that men may be either above or below its temptations. To imagine you will risk your hateful business, for the sake of avenging yourself on the dead, is idle beyond all measure, and should you be seized with such an odd fancy I own you will take me by surprise. But that I know you will not do, inasmuch as every slur you cast on him, would recoil on yourself. Now I have said my say, and as I shall have to warn Ezekiel to fly from the falling house of the Trimmington interest, and I shall have a few little carrion jobs for him in the borough, I daresay he will intercede with you to make my peace. To-morrow Mr. Owen shall call on you.”

With this parting address he took his leave, and

the worthy lawyer in whose hands he placed all his affairs had the satisfaction next day of so amicably arranging matters, as actually to bring back a complimentary note of thanks from Mr. Sawdry, for the handsome acknowledgment he had made of his wish to spare Mrs. Burton's feelings, and to deal gently with the fatherless and widow, and also to announce that Augustus Tomnoddy had disgraced himself too much to be ever again supported by the conscientious Yellow party at Midhampton.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE LYNX FORMS A MOST UNNATURAL ALLIANCE.

"I AM sorry to tell you, Colonel Mainwaring," said Marcellus Aurantius to his host, on the morning immediately succeeding the Prince's ghostly visitation, "that I shall be compelled to curtail my stay with you in a very unexpected manner. I fear that I must leave your hospitable roof to-morrow afternoon at the very latest, and that my return is very uncertain, as I shall most probably have to proceed to Vienna to request an audience of my Imperial master, before I again see my friends at Midhampton. Matters of no light importance have suddenly come to my knowledge, and I must lose no time in communicating them in the proper quarter, which will render my departure absolutely unavoidable, but if you will be troubled with me again in the summer, I hope to see more of you in a few weeks."

"What on earth are you running away for in such a hurry, Marcellus?" asked Leila, pettishly, and crushing an egg shell in its cup with as much apparent virulence as if she were pounding the head of "the loathsome caterpillar" instead; "a rolling stone gathers no moss, they say, and I am sure all that racing about Europe, as if you were a courier, will do you no good."

"Stones are often all the better for being free from moss, Miss Mainwaring," said the Hungarian very simply, not entirely comprehending that very illogical proverb, "and many a fine old castle would now be

entire, whose ruins alone point out where the stronghold of a man of might once reared itself, had it not been for the ravages of neglected vegetation ; but to vary your simile a little, ' A sword which is constantly in use will never rust,' and such a weapon in the hand of the Emperor shall Marcellus Aurantius ever be, while life and health remain to him. If you would know my reasons for so soon quitting you, I must tell you that the papers your clever enacting of the ghost last night has enabled me to obtain, are of such terrific importance to the peace, or I might say the existence, of the government under which I serve, that I can entrust them to no other hand than my own, and they will never leave my possession until I lay them in person before his Imperial Majesty himself. But all this is unintelligible to you, Colonel, I presume, for we did not venture to take you into our secret."

" Not exactly," answered the Colonel, smiling ; " Leila has been telling me your ghost adventure of last night, and I hope its result may exercise a favourable influence over the fortunes of our friend Phil, who appears from my daughter's account to be in evil case at present. The Prince seems terribly shaken by his vision, by the by, for he is ill in bed, and has begged to be undisturbed till noon, to recruit his nerves ; but whether he has discovered the trickery practised on him, and the real nature of the agency by which he has been robbed of his papers, I cannot tell, as he merely informed me that he felt very unwell, and should like to be excused breakfasting with the family."

" You have seen him, then ?" said Marcellus.

" Yes, he sent for me this morning under colour of making the apologies for his late rising, of which I have spoken, but in reality, as I cannot help thinking, to see if I evinced any knowledge of the events of last

night; but as I luckily was quite innocent of any share of your conspiracy, my countenance, I imagine, exhibited no traces of anything more than polite regret at the indisposition of my guest. But what is your plan of action for to-day, since, I presume, you intend pushing your scheme a little farther before you leave us?"

"Certainly," replied Marcellus, "I have abundance of work on my hands at present, as I must contrive to reconnoitre all three detachments of the enemy, before I leave the plan of my campaign in the hands of my second in command; and as Miss Leila will very soon have to carry on the war by herself, the least I can do is to put everything into proper training for her. My first mission was originally to the Prince, but if he is in bed, and likely to remain there till past noon, I cannot wait for his rising, but must begin with Madame Krummacher, and then returning to catch the Prince, before Mrs. Darcy exhibits him in her carriage, wind up with the illustrious Karl Dolchein, as madame's husband is really named; after which I must content myself with leaving instructions behind of how to enforce obedience to my demands should these good folks mutiny when I am gone. So if I am considered worthy of the honour of your company, fair lady," he concluded, addressing himself to Leila, "you will do me a great favour if you will drive with me into Cadstone, and show me where Mr. Whiting lives, with whom, as I understand, Madame Krummacher is at present residing."

While he was speaking, a servant entered the room with the compliments of the Prince di Capello to the Count of —, and he greatly wished to speak to him before he went out. Having arranged therefore to delay their drive until after luncheon, the trio broke up, the Colonel to the petty sessions at Midhampton,

Leila to visit Aunt Dosy, who always breakfasted in her own room, and afterwards to gossip with Julia, whose share in the performances of the previous night had made her also amongst the tribe of lazyboots, and Marcellus to his interview with the noble Prince.

He found that illustrious exile in a very dolorous frame of mind, sorely disquieted by the disappearance of his papers, and more than half inclined to suspect his present visitor of being concerned in their abstraction, yet at the same time perfectly convinced of the reality of the apparition he had lately witnessed, and determined by every means in his power to conciliate Marcellus by the most energetic co-operation in his hostility to Karl Dolchein. He had looked forward with mingled hope and apprehension to his interview with the Hungarian, upon which he honestly believed his future destiny hung; with hope that he should discover that his too dangerous secrets had not fallen into hands so capable of using them effectually, and apprehension lest the opening address of the Count might disclose the fearful confirmation of his worst fears and announce to him the intelligence that an English gaol would prove his only alternative to yet greater evils. For he well knew that the holder of those letters had him under his thumb, even as regards the country in which he now lived, and although a term of imprisonment or even transportation might be rather better than his well-deserved doom at home, it was not a very agreeable subject of contemplation, to lie in a soft warm bed, with every luxury around him, and look forward to exchanging this for the treadmill at a Penitentiary, or road-making in a penal colony. That he had no mercy to expect from Marcellus, he might very fairly argue, from the fact of his papers embracing a neat little scheme for assassinating that very person, which would render the safe-keeping of the princely body a

matter of personal interest to one of the principals in the intended tableau of "Italy's justice on her enslaver;" wherefore his anxiety to solve the question of whether he was detected or not, became painfully great, though he shrunk with indistinct terror from hastening the crisis for which he longed.

Several times he decided on seeking an interview, and as often did his courage fail him; he attempted to pump the man who called him, as to the possibility of his letters having been accidentally carried away, but all in vain; he made similar essays to obtain information from the Colonel, as the reader has already been told, but could extract nothing from him, but a formal assurance that papers left in any part of his house could not possibly be lost, and that if any servant found them lying about, they were sure to be brought to him, and should then be restored to their lawful owner; he exhausted all his ingenuity in devising plans to recover his property without explaining their nature, but could arrive at no satisfactory conclusion. So in sheer despair, he at last rang his bell, and plunging into his difficulties with as stout a heart as he could summon, invited Marcellus to a conference which he hoped would at least put him out of further suspense.

It would not be easy to exaggerate his relief, when his visitor, assuming an air of grave and dignified condescension and good-will, as though prepared to receive a confession of past follies and a promise of amendment in a cordial and almost friendly spirit, and to offer his assistance to rescue the penitent from the consequences of his crimes, if he would but exert himself to merit such protection, informed him that he had been as anxious for an interview as the Prince himself, and had very important reasons for seeking him without delay.

"I fear, Prince di Capello," said Marcellus, "that

I have been too severe upon you during the last two days, and that I have laid to your charge the full blame of many actions, in which I now think you were not the principal offender, to say the very least; where indeed you have been rather the tool of designing men than the author of the villanies in which, I grieve to say, you have had a part. I do not pretend to call you a very high-minded man even now, but I believe there are partners of yours far worse, and I now come to give you a chance of severing your ties with these instigators of your worst actions, and to assure you of protection if, quitting them, you cast in your lot with more honest men. You will probably think me superstitious, for I believe you have no faith in supernatural agencies, or, in point of fact, in the existence of a Ruler of the universe, who is not of this world, but at the risk of thus injuring my character for shrewdness in your eyes, I must confess that I am impelled by a vision or a dream to the course I am now adopting. I shall not trouble you with details, but simply say that I have been warned to consult you upon the means of atoning for your past follies by an active work of reparation, and to adjure you to lose no time in ranging yourself upon the side of right and justice, in which course alone you can find safety. I was informed that Karl Dolchein is your enemy as well as mine, a fact which my last conversation with you would appear to contradict—but of that you know best; and I have now only to say that if it be so, and it be fear of him alone that detains you from quarrelling with him, I pledge myself that if you make common cause with me against him, your cause shall be mine, and not a hair of your head shall he touch, except under peril of the full weight of my vengeance. He will never move a hand against me, I know perfectly well, and if he did, the strife between us would not last

very long ; if therefore your heart is already inclining to me, as the maiden in my vision said, speak without delay ; if your mind is unchanged since our last interview, I beg you not to detain me, for I have much to do this day. Why, then, have you called me here?"

"Tell me of the vision," said the Italian eagerly ; "what did it resemble—when did it visit you, and what were its communications?—for I also have experienced a dreadful yet hope-inspiring visitation from the dead, and it seems to me as though the same spirit had appeared to both."

"It was a beauteous maiden of sixteen or seventeen summers," replied Marcellus in a sentimental voice, "clad in robes of virgin white, and crowned with a chaplet of inconceivable loveliness and simplicity ; she seemed not of earth, yet hardly of heaven, and resembled neither Our Lady, nor any saint whose portrait I have seen, yet her whole appearance, voice, and manner, struck me with reverence, and I listened to her, as a man would hearken to counsels of purity and wisdom. She spoke of you, and told me you had been weak and even wicked, but that you had been led away by others ; she hinted that fear, not love, bound you to Karl Dolchein ; and she bade me, if you came to me for protection, and promised to show your penitence by assisting in frustrating the designs of your old associates, by no means to cast you off, but to aid you in retrieving the past, and regaining your lost position amongst honest men. She then left me, and I, deeply pondering these things, resolved to seek you as soon as I rose, but finding you were ill I delayed my visit until now, when by your request I stand here. Speak, then, if you have aught to say."

"The spirit of my departed sister has only told thee the truth, Count of —," replied the trembling Italian ; "I am above all things desirous to lay aside

for ever the evil life I have hitherto led, and to renounce the dangerous and seditious society in which I have so constantly mixed; if therefore I can serve you, and if you will pledge me your countly word in return, that you will defend me from my enemies, and enable me to recover my position, you have nothing to do but to issue your directions, and it shall be my care to pay them due respect. I can supply you in a short time, I trust, with letters of great importance, but, at present, I have mislaid the key of my travelling paper case, and cannot immediately put my hand on them; by the evening, however, I have no doubt that I can lay them before you." This he said, not only in vague hope that he should yet recover the lost documents, in the common course of things, but also to watch the countenance of Marcellus, while he spoke, to detect his consciousness of their nature and the place where they were now deposited, if it should so chance that he had already seen them.

But no trace of emotion was seen on the bronzed face of the Hungarian, as he answered, in kind but somewhat indefinite assurances of his support, to his offers of service, and then turned carelessly to the window, which looked upon the garden, and opening which he leant out for a few minutes, humming to himself in a thoughtful manner, but stealthily scribbling a short note on the back of a letter, which having wrapped round a sovereign to give it weight he laid upon the sill, and addressed a few words of general conversation to his companion, diversifying his remarks, however, with the somewhat childish occupation of blowing a kind of *reveillee* through his closed hands, as he carelessly lounged against the open casement. Presently, from the conservatory door peeped forth a large straw hat, under which a mass of black curls swang backwards and forwards in the light air,

and which being saluted by a missile from above, in the shape of a piece of mortar, valiantly sallied forth from its hiding-place, instead of shrinking yet further back into safety; and looking upwards with a mischievous smile, Leila Mainwaring appeared, to take her share in the plot precisely at the time when her fellow-conspirator required her assistance. The note was thrown down into the straw hat and carried into the conservatory; so Marcellus, now sure of active co-operation in his plans, returned to his conversation with the Prince in excellent spirits.

"I see nothing to prevent your obtaining a free pardon for all past offences," said he, "if you can once establish a claim to forgiveness, by producing papers of such value, as those of which you speak; but pardon me, if I say frankly, that it is indispensably necessary that the letters themselves should be produced, and not copies of them. I mean as far as public affairs are concerned, for as to our private arrangements, your hostility to Dolchein will of course be too openly evinced to leave any possibility of my being deceived in you, and as long as you make common cause with me, both your motives and your ulterior objects are only of interest to me, as far as my wish to see you an honest man rather than a knave may influence me to act more cordially in your favour under such circumstances, than simply in accordance with a specified agreement."

The Italian proceeded with great volubility to pour forth his assurances of both loyalty to the Emperor and fidelity to Marcellus, coupled however with fears lest his means of proving his good will might not, without any fault of his own, fall somewhat short of what was required by his visitor; and was still in the full current of his eloquence, when a servant entered the room with Miss Leila's compliments, and had she

understood the Colonel rightly that the Prince had missed some foreign papers last night; if so, she fancied she knew something about them, for she had found a large envelope, apparently containing letters, on her music-stand, and presumed these might prove the missing documents.

Without even giving Capello time to demur to his proceedings, Marcellus hastily rose, and saying, "I think I had better perhaps fetch them myself, the man might possibly suspect something, and keep one back," left the room to bring back the promised pledges of fidelity, against which arrangement the Italian, bitterly as he regretted the posture of affairs, did not venture to enter any protest. His principal anxiety now was to abstract the letter embracing the hopeful scheme for the assassination of Marcellus, amongst other foreign tyrants, and so thoroughly was he engrossed, on the return of the Hungarian, in this grand object, that he paid but little attention to the absolute appropriation of one particular paper, which even he would hardly have surrendered to his new ally, had he observed its nature, crushing at one blow as it did the whole hopes of a party which he loved as much as such a degraded being could love anything. But unluckily, it lay next to the very one he sought to purloin, so while he was effecting his object, Marcellus in return had achieved his, and had spared himself alike the trouble and risk of capturing by main force, what he certainly would not have stood at much to attain, if unable to compass its possession by fair means. And lest the reader should wonder that our crafty conspirator should have jeopardized the safety of the secrets upon which he placed so high a value, after having once had them in his own power, I must here remark, that although the letters themselves were no mean spoil, their value would be enor-

mously enhanced by fuller explanation of their meaning, and more correct information as to the present abodes of certain persons therein mentioned, and it was not by any means his object to incense the Italian, but, on the contrary, to convert him into one of the birds who held such wondrous conversations with the Aurantii, to say nothing of his anxiety to keep up his indignation against Dolchein, at whose head, he was, metaphorically speaking, to be fired off that very afternoon. So bearing in mind that, if the worst came to the worst, he could lay violent hands upon the coveted spoil, and defy his enemy to risk the exposure of recovering them by legal means, he subjected to the eye of Capello the mass of documents which he held in his hand, with one single exception, and allowing the theft of the latter to pass unnoticed, as he knew how often fear makes the reptiles bite, who would run away from us if we would but let them, discussed the contents of the treasonable budget with his new tool; and having obtained his explanations of several dark passages, and extorted from him a confession of his share in the plots therein divulged, and a humble prayer for pardon in consideration of his valuable evidence, Marcellus withdrew from the chamber of the invalid, requesting him at his earliest convenience to array himself in his princely apparel, and open the campaign against Karl Dolchein.

"'Tis a contemptible creature," soliloquised he, as he took his way down stairs, "but I should have been loth to cut the poor wretch's throat with his own dagger, as it were. All this scheming and countermining is not at all to my taste, for I would much rather fight my sovereign's cause in the field, than plot in the chamber, but there is no help for it, and it is madness to be blown into the air, for want of sense to hoist the foe into the sky with his own mine instead.

Our empire is a strange place to live in, and puts me a good deal in mind of the monkeys in the Zoological Gardens, I used to visit with Leila, each beast robbing all the rest, and being robbed himself, until half the food was spoilt or wasted without benefitting one of the lot. I wonder whether honesty would successfully compete with knavery? these English say it will. I wish from my soul I belonged to this country, and had a natural taste for raw beef, which is execrable, and port wine, which is worse; and as for my love for my Imperial master, the country did well enough when Probus Aurantius was sole lord and prince over all his dependents, and might again." Here the "Bronze Horse" became very audible, as he kicked aside with great virulence some withered sticks, that had been broken off the trees in the avenue, and lay in his path. "But then in revolutions, like a camp kettle of soup, the scum always comes to the top, and the bones and sinews lie stewing at the bottom. But here comes Leila. O queen of the elfin land! I am in a dreadful humour, and savage enough to play at bowls with the skulls of my ancestors. Pray help me to get into a better temper, by playing with me at battledore," in which babyish occupation the illustrious Count regaled his angry soul, till the sound of the luncheon bell summoned the players to the house, and reminded them that act the second in the drama of the day would soon begin.

CHAPTER XV.

ROME IS ONCE MORE SAVED BY THE VIGILANCE OF A GOOSE.

"I LEARNT from Julia this morning a piece of information, which I was very vexed to hear," said Leila to her companion, as they drove towards Cadstone to call upon Madame Krummacher; "Mrs. Darcy announced her intention yesterday of paying a visit to the very lady we are now on our way to see, and I am more than suspicious of her good intentions. There is every reason to fear that she will espouse Pauline's cause, and by her pretended sympathy keep up her courage and determination to adhere to her present plan of action, and if so, it is hard to say what damage may be thus done to poor Phil's interests."

"Espouse Pauline's cause!" exclaimed Marcellus in amazement, "surely that can never be. Mrs. Darcy appears an inordinately proud woman; indeed, her exceeding self-admiration seems her greatest fault, and it is impossible, I should think, that she can support the claims of a person who will certainly do no great honour to the family name, especially in the eyes of a lady to whom birth and fashion go for so much. Besides which, do you not remember the violent things she said of her, only a few days ago, and though she does not strike me as either a wise or a high-minded woman, I can hardly think she could change from calling Madame Krummacher a little rope-dancing girl, to choosing her for a daughter-in-law, and all to no purpose."

"You do not know that good lady as well as I do,

Marcellus," replied Leila, with an unusually grave and thoughtful face; "if you did, you would have seen throughout that ridiculous and disgraceful tirade of hers against her son, the cloven hoof of her low cunning peeping out from beneath the embroidered robe of her proud indignation. I read, last winter, a suggestion upon the conduct of one of James the Second's ministers, which although I do not believe is historically true, as regards the individual person, is very emblematic, as I terribly fear, of the present policy of that detestable mother of a most honourable and high-principled son. It is there hinted that James was incited to many of his most tyrannous and oppressive acts by a lover of liberty, so violent and uncompromising in his views as to desire to see the king so completely exhaust the patience of the people, as to create an inevitable reaction, and thus hurl him from the throne; and it was to the ruin which these intolerable acts were bringing on the obnoxious cause, and not to the success of the measures which he advocated, that this crafty statesman looked for the reward of his labours. And I believe, from the bottom of my heart, that Mrs. Darcy is scheming for the exile of her son, and his contracting a marriage which will keep him out of society, for the express purpose of herself retaining control over his property, or at least enjoying the free use of his family seat and town house. She knows that if this marriage (with which heaven certainly has little to do, whatever other dynasties may have) be once made, Philip will live abroad upon a comparatively small expenditure, and in perfect seclusion. She feels convinced that he will never cast a thought on Midhampton or Monkworth; and when he is absent, who is so natural a tenant and constant visitor as his own mother?"

"Can she really be capable of such conduct? she

appeared to me a very silly woman, but by no means a scheming one," said Marcellus.

"There lies her cunning," sighed Leila, "and many a person has been taken in by it. But I assure you papa has as much this opinion of her, as I have; indeed, it is from him I learnt it, and one most shocking proof of it has been evinced already. You know that Philip has inherited most of his large fortune from an uncle, do you not? that uncle had once a son, and the poor boy was accidentally killed by his own father, owing to the wicked cunning of Mrs. Darcy. He was, as papa has told me, a good-hearted lad, but very wild, and having been much neglected, and allowed to mix with grooms and gamekeepers in a very foolish manner, had acquired a bad habit of drinking too much, if not looked after; but such a very little control over him was enough to check him, for he was not obstinate or badly disposed, that his friends hoped it would wear off as he got older, and as they broke him going amongst such company as that in which he learnt it, and as they had at last persuaded his father to take better care of him, all seemed going on very well.

"It so happened, however, that Colonel Darcy, *i.e.*, Philip's father, invited his brother, one summer, to visit him at Monkworth, together with his son, and the very week after their arrival was the village feast. Mrs. Darcy, then quite a young woman, with an only son of six or seven years of age, took the two boys, or rather the child and the lad, down with her to see the merry-making, and instead of taking the least pains to look after her nephew, she allowed him to enter into the rough games that were going on, and to treat the rustics to beer, and, in fact, to run every risk of getting into trouble which was possible. At length she brought him home—professing to be shocked

beyond measure, yet making little excuses for him—in a state of almost insensible intoxication, and covered with blood and dust, for he had been fighting with some other boys, and had either fallen or been knocked down in the struggle. She allowed his father to see him in this state, though papa tried all he could to smuggle him into his room quietly, but she would insist on excusing herself to her brother-in-law, and the poor, hasty old man was so furious, that in his anger he thrust the boy so violently aside, that he pitched downstairs like a log, and partly from the fall, in which he struck his head against the wall, and partly from a sort of apoplexy, never spoke or moved again. You may easily imagine the grief of the unfortunate father, nor was Colonel Darcy by any means deficient in sympathy for the terrible disaster which had rendered his brother childless; but it was reported, on good authority, that the lady of the house had been heard to mutter to herself many cruel and unseemly self-gratulations at the increased brilliancy of her own son's prospects; and it is past all doubt, that on several occasions when poor Lionel's unhappy failing had been mentioned in her presence, her eyes had lighted up with a triumphant malice, and she would gaze on the little Philip with a satisfied air, as though she already beheld him heir to his uncle's lands. I do not, of course, charge her with compassing his death, but his disgrace and alienation from his father's love she did work for, with but too fatal success. She certainly pillaged her husband during his life, of all she could lay her hands on, and that, too, as is now discovered, not to feed her extravagance, or to defray her personal expenses, but to save a purse against the time when she would be a widow, and her son in possession of the entailed estates; and since Philip has succeeded to his property, she has pursued

the same game, laying by money as a magpie lays by spoons, under the cloak of an utter ignorance of business, and aristocratic indifference to money-matters."

"She must be a strange woman," said Marcellus; "but I really think that the suspicion you express of her saving the money of which she despoils her son, must be a little overstrained; I can imagine a woman mean enough to spend her son's property in an underhand manner, but the cheating him of it to save, rather exceeds my belief."

"Then allow me, most incredulous of the misbelieving Giaours, whose practical conjugation of the verb 'to skin,' seems to have been carried out in every conceivable tense, active and passive, during the religious differences of your valiant house with the Turks, from the determined past of, I had skinned your grandfather before you were born or thought of, down to the corresponding future, then you shall be skinned yourself. Allow, I say, your faithful slave to venture to remark one little thing, which is, that Colonel Darcy was once arrested for a debt of madame's, and would have been handed off to the King's Bench, if one of the mutes, or whatever they call executioners of civil justice, had not discovered madame's banking book, or rather book of accounts between her and a certain firm, to whose care she entrusted her savings, by which means the man of war was not only released from durance vile, but presented with upwards of two thousand pounds, since he, like a sensible man, made a clean sweep of her ungodly gains, and balanced her Dr. and Cr. pages with Messrs. Swindletrap and Co., in a most satisfactory way, by simply drawing out the whole sum in their hands, and closing the transactions; which, oh, hereditary wolf-slayer of the Eastern land! looks a little like hoarding up money, even at the sacrifice of

her husband, and if so, why not do the same with her son. Besides which, Mr. Owen, the family lawyer, has just informed papa by letter, that he finds Mrs. Darcy must be possessed of at least twenty thousand pounds, for that she has actually deposited sufficient security for that sum in the hands of another practitioner, to carry out a scheme of hers, for which she had previously attempted to raise the requisite amount by one of her dishonest impositions upon poor Phil. And where could the money have come from, except from such a source?"

"It looks rather suspicious, I must own," replied Marcellus, "yet I should hardly like to condemn the lady upon no better evidence. I am no great lover of the system of drawing very important conclusions from very slight opportunities of judging, and should more than once have suffered much myself from a too unfavourable construction being put upon actions, in themselves not only innocent but laudable. But how is it that your father has kept up such an intimacy with Mrs. Darcy, if he has so bad an opinion of her? I should have thought he would have shunned her society, rather than cultivated it, as he seems to have done, from the fact of your being her godchild, and other little things I have picked up in conversation."

"I believe she was selected, or rather her offer was accepted, to be one of my sureties in my baptism," responded Leila, with a rigid orthodoxy of expression, worthy of Florence herself, "to obviate the disagreeable alternative of returning a flat refusal to a relation of my mother, who, despite of being an avowed free-thinker, who habitually promulgated her opinions with an open contempt of our faith, as much at variance with good breeding as good sense, was, for some extraordinary reason or other, desirous of acting for me in the very last capacity in which such a person should

dare to intrude. To accept her was impossible, to offend her was not advisable, as you may readily perceive, when I tell you that the Priory and the estate belonging to it were left us by her, and of course was not to be risked, as long as a fair means of escape presented itself; for I will do papa the justice to say, that nothing in the world would have induced him to make such a mockery of his child's admission into the Church, and that he was never sparing of indignant rebukes of her profane folly, when expressed in his house, or under circumstances where he thought himself entitled to interfere. So Mrs. Darcy's offer was taken, and although I have not much to boast of, even now, upon the subject of my godmother, I cannot but approve, on the whole, of papa's decision. As to the rest, he has always loved Philip Darcy like a son, and treated him as if he really were so, and to spare his feelings has put up with numberless impertinent speeches from his mother, which he would have borne from no one else."

"Perhaps he would have liked to make a son of him, Miss Mainwaring," said Marcellus, with a strange want of his usual politeness; "indeed, when I first knew you, I thought it was a tolerably certain thing, though, I will own to you, I have heard the story of Pauline before; but I assuredly fancied I should one day revisit my excellent friend the Colonel, with his two children by his side, but that it would be a matter of brother and sister no longer, nevertheless."

"So you think papa would have willingly introduced Phil into his own family," said Leila, as calmly and composedly as if talking about Sobieski's stirrup, "and why not? Is there anything so strange in his looking forward with pleasure to leaving his only child, when he dies, happily and honourably settled

in life, with a man of birth, wealth, and talents, in whose high principle and integrity, moreover, he reposes implicit confidence? I have heard this from Mrs. Darcy two or three times as an insult; I think it very likely as a mere matter-of-fact, and consider him a very sensible and prudent father if it be so."

"It seems as though you had no particular objection to the idea," growled Marcellus.

"I never thought much about it, having more important matters to attend to in my rabbits and pigeons," said Leila, carelessly; "but I see no harm in persons who have heads, with brains inside, instead of door-mats of black hair outside, looking on the matter in that light. Surely it was better than capturing a profligate young rascal of a nobleman, looking out for money, or a needy foreigner, whose 'propriety,' as he himself would word it more correctly than he intended, is on the banks of the Rhine, *i.e.*, a precious long way off." Then suddenly remembering what an offensive speech she had made, considering who her auditor was, she stopped short, and with her face burning with shame, exclaimed, in a hurried tone, "Pardon me, Marcellus! I meant no insult to you or yours. I assure you I spoke thoughtlessly, and with no intention to offend."

"Marcellus Aurantius does not lightly apply such expressions to himself," was the cold reply, delivered in the haughtiest tone of a voice which admitted of great excellence in that direction.

"Don't be cross, Marcellus. I have tried to apologise for saying a silly thing, and that ought to content you," said Leila, with a mixture of good-humoured wish to conciliate, and high-spirited self-respect, very characteristic of her nature; "if a man is not willing to accept the *amende honorable* when it comes in his way, he may, perchance, hunt for it a long while when

he wants to find it. You charged me, which signifies little, and papa, which signifies a good deal, with laying traps for Philip Darcy, and meant what you said. I made a pert speech in return, not in the least hinting at you, and meekly begged your pardon besides, so I think you have little right to complain of the balance of the offence between us. But, however, as you are my father's guest, and we are very soon going to part, I will make one more attempt to hold out the olive-branch of peace. I own, then, that I said a thing which involves the necessity of my acknowledging that I was very stupid, to avoid the worse charge of being inhospitable and ill-bred; will you forgive me? Let us shake hands and be friends," and she laid her little glove upon his arm with a coaxing smile, that banished the thunder-cloud from the brow of the Hungarian with a marvellous celerity.

"I hardly think the proverbial receipt for making friends speaks of hands at all, lady," said he, merrily; "but as for forgiveness, it is your part, not mine, to accord that. And truth to say, I must re-echo your last remark in an almost servile manner, and plead that I spoke like a fool, rather than be suspected of breathing a disrespectful word of you or yours. I spoke hastily and in pique, and I beg you to forget my foolish words."

"But what excited your anger? we were very good friends five minutes ago," quoth Leila, with a strange suspicion, not unaccompanied by a pleasurable sensation, that she could answer her own question if she chose.

Her companion made no reply, and neither party continuing the conversation, they fell into complete silence, looking out of different windows of the carriage in an absent manner; Marcellus thinking over his coming interview, and Leila engrossed with her

own reflections, whatever they may have been, into which we will not inquire too closely.

The lady was the first to recommence the conversation, and her opening sentence would have betrayed to a less quick-sighted person than Marcellus Auran-tius, that her thoughts had not wholly wandered from the present company, however absently she might have appeared to be watching the surrounding land-scape—"So you are going away from us," said she, mournfully; "I think nothing seems to prosper with us this year. It is very shabby of you to run off, just when we are so dull and anxious, and want some one to cheer us. But perhaps I ought not to blame you for flying from our doleful society, like the rats from a falling house; it must be stupid work for you."

"Nay, Miss Mainwaring," replied Marcellus, "nothing but urgent necessity should have torn me away from so pleasant a circle as yours, especially before I have had the honour of being presented to Miss Montgomery, of whom I have formed a very high opinion, and already entertain the greatest possible respect. But duty calls me, and I must go, for you have afforded me too valuable information, by your supernatural influence over the Prince, to be lightly neglected, or impaired in its utility by unnecessary delay."

"Promise me, Marcellus," interrupted Leila, eagerly, "that you will not make the knowledge I have been the instrument of obtaining, the source of bloodshed or oppression to the poor victims whose plots you have discovered. I could not rest in my bed, if a thought came over me that, while I was happy and prosperous, my fellow-creatures were dying or suffering for offences which my trickery of last night had brought home to them. Consider, calmly and dis-

passionately, how unfair this would be to me, who have indirectly so large a share in the discovery ; remember that I am not of your nation, and naturally care very little about matters which are more serious in your eyes, and that you have no fair right to make me a partner in the detective police arrangements of a foreign country—do give me that promise before you go.”

Marcellus hesitated. “ It is rather hard,” said he, “ that all the sympathy of society seems to go with those who justly pay the penalty of their own offences, and rarely, if ever, with the aggrieved party. For the trouble, anxiety, expense, and even loss of life, which are involved in the preservation of tranquillity and order, no one seems to care a rush. The government whose means are impoverished by the necessity of keeping up a sufficient surveillance upon the disaffected and reckless demagogues who play with the prosperity of a country like gamblers at a hazard table—the statesman, whose health and nerves fail under the galling weight of petty anxieties and undignified brawls—the officials, who sink under exposure to hardships, or whose lives are shortened by the constant petty injuries they receive in the execution of their duty—all these get no pity, all their troubles are coldly considered incidental to their calling, and people argue that if they receive the benefits they must take the risks ; but if a vile fellow, careless of all consequences, prodigal of life and violence, dead to all decency, stakes his rascally existence on some desperate game, and happens to lose, every soul is open-mouthed in his favour, and loudly proclaims the exceeding fitness of remitting his losses to a man who was to have had all the gains if he won. Now, in my humble opinion, if a ruffian insists on forcing me to play or fight him for my lands and life, against his head,

though I am bitterly unwilling to agree to such an unequal stake, the least you can do is to let me have the brute's head if I can get it, and hang it up in my drawing-room, if I have the bad taste to see any ornament in it, without a word of remonstrance from any one. But your fellow-countrymen appear to argue just the contrary, and to consider the crime of murder and robbery a mere nothing compared to the sin of punishing the offender, from amiable and honourable motives, I allow, but not very reasonably. There is our good friend the Prince, for instance, who has in his desk, at this very moment, a neatly arranged plan for assassinating your humble servant, amongst other enemies of liberty, and I suppose I am bound to consider this a mere difference of opinion, amounting to little more than that he has a fancy for my life, and I have a trifling prejudice in favour of preserving it; in fact, that killing you is a kind of way the Italians have, and it is folly to make a fuss about it. And here you gravely enter a protest against taking steps, which, for all you know to the contrary, may be the only means of saving the lives and properties of thousands, nay, the peace of Europe at large; and this you support by an appeal of so personal a nature to my gallantry, and consideration for the wishes of a lady, as to render it almost a breach of the law of honour to refuse to commit a still more flagrant infraction of my duty as a soldier, a loyal subject, and an enemy of misrule. But fortunately the papers I have obtained do not necessitate an example being made of any individuals, so I can pledge my word that you have not assisted in handing over any person whatsoever to punishment; on the other hand, I trust that we shall be in time to prevent an *emeute*, in which there must needs have been much bloodshed; so your part in the affair has been to save life, not to destroy

it. There is one person, indeed, upon whom I must execute some vengeance in mere self-defence, but I will trust to my own arm to wreak it, and have no recourse to law; so in this case, also, you will have no blame to attach to yourself, for I presume you will not deny my right to protect myself by fair and open means."

"And you mean to risk your life in a duel with a debased wretch like him," cried Leila, forgetting in her hurry that she neither knew who "he" was, nor the nature of the feud; "how can you be so foolish; and so regardless of the feelings of your friends? If he has broken the laws of his country, let him take the consequences; but it is madness for you to involve yourself in such an affair."

"I flattered myself I was acting up to your express wishes, Miss Leila," replied Marcellus, demurely, "you seemed to be so very anxious that the courts of judgment should have nothing to do with my business. But, to tell the truth, I must deal with this person myself, first of all, because he is a man of high family, and I love not to see good blood bedew a scaffold, nor the descendant of statesmen and warriors condemned to the galleys; secondly, because the matter itself is a very delicate affair, and must not be bruited abroad for the edification of the people. So I must respectfully decline obeying this command, as I would have done the other, had it been necessary."

"But if you should fall, Marcellus, I should never forgive myself for having been the means of bringing to your knowledge the information which renders this rencontre necessary. Can you not grant me this favour also, as a parting gift?"

"Nay, lady fair, you ask what is impossible to grant. It affects the honour of a branch of my family, and if Marcellus Aurantius can no longer give shelter

to his house, under the broad shadow of his countly banner, his own good sword at least shall not tarry in avenging its wrongs. I have no fear of falling. I am a profound believer in my star, and have no conception of its setting just at present; but if it does, why then, to quote your metrical version of a ballad I taught you,

“‘Then monk shall chant, and bell shall toll
For that departed warrior’s soul.’

I have neither parents, nor wife, nor children, nor brethren to mourn my death, and the only persons who will miss me at all will be my troopers, who will lose an indulgent officer, and his Apostolic Majesty, who, though it is abominably vain to say so, will have many a worse soldier left him than the Count of —, who is gone. So that moan is soon made.”

“Have you no friends in England?” asked little Lola, turning a pair of black eyes, sparkling with tears, upon her handsome companion, in so imploring a manner, that I tremble for the consequences, had not the carriage stopped at Mr. Whiting’s door, in time to prevent any lengthened rejoinder.

“Many, the best and dearest,” said he, “whom I value more highly than I can express. Adieu for the present! At dinner I shall report progress.”

So saying, he quitted the carriage, and Leila, sinking back against the cushions, was dreamily whirled down into the town, to leave cards for the Colonel, and to look over prints at the circulating library. She was not destined, however, to remain very long engaged in this distraction of her gloomy thoughts, to the contemplation of the treasures of pictorial art, for a passing remark of good Mr. Glossup, the master of the art emporium, quickly caused her to close the portfolio she held before her, with a bang that made

the nervous little printseller leap almost out of his skin, partly with surprise, and partly from fear of the damage done to his beloved engravings, and order the carriage to proceed without delay to the railway station.

"You will be sorry, Miss Mainwaring, to hear that poor Mr. Shelford, of West Langley, has had another paralytic stroke, and they hardly expect him to live through the day."

His words were hardly spoken, before Leila shot up, "like a pyramid of fire," closed the book with a bang, as I have before said, and was half way to the electric telegraph office, before the worthy tradesman had satisfied his anxious mind that no injury had accrued from her violence. Three messages did the active little maiden send to London, or rather three copies of the same, one to Sir Magnus Oliphant, one to Philip Darcy, Esq., and one to Mr. Owen, Lincoln's Inn Fields, and the burthen of her thrice reiterated ditty was simply this—"Mr. Shelford is dying; lose no time in selling the presentation—to-morrow may be too late."

The clerk laughed to himself as he took down his instructions, and remarked to a companion as Leila retired after completing her business, "Parson McKenzie is likely to lose his living after all; I almost pity him, for God knows he has done plenty of dirty work for it."

CHAPTER XVI.

SHYLOCK INSISTS UPON HIS POUND OF FLESH.

"A FOREIGN gentleman, who won't give no name, ma'am, has sent you this here outlandish-looking card, and wants to see you directly," said a shabby-looking maidservant to Madame Krummacher, as she sate in the same dingy drawing-room, as when we last met with her, bedizened in all her smartest attire, for the visit of Mrs. Darcy, alluded to by Leila, had really come to pass, and that flower of the *beau monde* was at the time of Marcellus's visit deposited in a faded velvet chair by the open window, having with her usual good breeding insisted on admitting a little fresh air into the room, which she elegantly compared to her idea of a milliner's workshop, "not that she had ever been in one!"

Pauline cast a hasty glance over the admission ticket, so strangely delivered to her in lieu of her visitor's name, and although to the common eye it appeared nothing more or less than a very nice clean playing card, with a few queer marks in the centre of the pips, her sudden paleness evinced her consciousness that it was being used as a kind of trump in a sterner game than a rubber of whist. She falteringly gave orders to show the stranger into the study, and apologising to Mrs. Darcy for being unavoidably summoned to meet a friend on private business, was about to quit the room, when the door opened, and the visitor himself appeared, disclosing to her horrified eyes the handsome form of Marcellus Aurantius.

He bowed very politely to Mrs. Darcy, and inquired if she had yet taken up her abode at the Hall—to which she returned rather a sulky negative—informed her that her daughter was well, and that Philip was in town—to which she made no other reply than merely “Oh, indeed!”—and then turning to Pauline, the gallant officer exclaimed, with a meaning smile, “You hardly expected to see me, I think, Madame Krummacher; I must beg your kind pardon for using the influence of a friend to gain admission, and also as a little token of the confidential terms on which we may treat. The bearer of such credentials will always find your house open to him I know, and treated as a friend; indeed, a good deal better, as an enemy to be feared. My business will keep, however, for the present, until I find you more disengaged.” And he began to talk on indifferent subjects, but Mrs. Darcy, who felt convinced that he had come as Phil’s emissary in some shape or other, and having chosen her course, was almost glad of an opportunity to hoist her colours without delay, replied to his passing remarks by monosyllables or stately inclinations of her head, and directly that a decent opportunity occurred, plunged boldly into the matter at issue.

“I believe you are an intimate friend of my son, young sir,” said she, haughtily, “and a sort of dangler after that impertinent chit, Leila Mainwaring, and I have good cause to suspect that your object in coming here, is to bring some message, or conduct some profligate intrigue connected with Phil, who I grieve to find has behaved so shamefully ill to this innocent young person.”

“I shall not deny that you are partially right, Mrs. Darcy,” answered Marcellus, quietly; “I certainly have come to speak with Madame Krummacher on a matter nearly relating to your son’s happiness, but

pardon me if I say, that my errand is for her private ear, and is not to be discussed before a third party. I shall be most happy to withdraw, and call at a more convenient time, if Madame Krummacher wishes it, but to talk over matters as we now are is impossible. Is it your desire that I should return presently?" said he, turning to Pauline.

"By no means," said she, quickly; "if you could wait a short time, as you were good enough to hint just now, you would confer a great favour on me, but since the honoured mother of my beloved husband has been so kind as to pay me a visit, and to promise me her support in my present trying circumstances, I am sure you would not wish me to leave her to attend to other business, or rob myself of her society so long as she deigns to stay with me."

"I will cheerfully await your leisure," replied Marcellus, "but do I hear you aright, that you have the sanction of Mrs. Darcy, to your claims on her son's hand?"

"You do hear rightly, sir," interrupted the lady spoken of; "I have made up my mind to throw all the weight of a mother's influence into the scale of honour and virtue. If my son has embittered the life and blighted the prospects of this unhappy female, it is just that he should suffer the consequences, and should expiate, by a life of seclusion, the glaring injury he has done to society at large. I do not say that he ought to make her mistress of Monkworth or Midhampton, and thus keep alive the memory of his error, for that would be to outrage all decency, but I think that he is bound to carry her to some peaceful foreign home, and there to devote his life to her, laying aside, for her sake, the luxuries and ostentatious comforts of his former rank in society. And this I know is Philip's own view of the case, for some years ago he was

anxious to follow this very course, which, being ignorant of the reasons that existed for the gratification of his wish, I then opposed with all my power; but now I feel what has been done can never be undone, and that as he has sown, so he must reap."

This startling confirmation of Leila's suspicions did not escape the notice of Marcellus, who was somewhat puzzled to decide in what way he should reply; hesitating as he did between fear of raising Pauline's hopes too high, by his prophecies of the station she would attain by her marriage, and hope, that by creating a breach in the ominous alliance between the claimant of Phil's hand and his scheming mother, he might do good service to his friend. The latter feeling, however, prevailed, to which his searching scrutiny of Pauline's countenance while Mrs. Darcy was speaking, contributed in no mean degree, plainly evincing as it did, that the expectant bride, however meekly bending to the will of her new supporter in outward seeming, to serve her own ends, had a very different line of conduct chalked out in her inmost mind. Acting, therefore, upon the maxim of "when rogues fall out, honest men come to their own," he proceeded to draw out Mrs. Darcy's complimentary scheme of expatriating Phil for his gross offence against all decency in allying himself to the very person in whose presence she was so coolly expressing her opinion, and thinking it, on the whole, more easy to blow up the embers of dislike, by apparently siding with madame, than by the contrary course, he determined to send his pride out to grass for the nonce, and meekly putting up with the old termagant's insolence, to spur her up to declare war upon the common enemy.

"As a mere matter of course," said he, "you will not like to visit Philip under his new circumstances; indeed, a forced marriage is in itself so objectionable,

and after all the notoriety with which this particular one is sure to be accompanied, it must necessarily be overloaded with even greater inconveniences ; but, at the same time, I think some compromise to spare your feelings as a mother, might very well be contrived, for to banish you wholly from the society of your son would be hard indeed. My own opinion is, therefore, that there can be no objection to Philip's visiting England alone every season, to see you and the rest of his friends, and leaving his wife behind for a short time under my guardianship, by which means he will be able to keep up a constant intercourse with his family, without your coming in contact with anything that need offend you. He can let the house in town to great advantage, I know, for I am aware of a very excellent offer for it, which would be made the instant that I dropped a hint that it would not be considered a liberty to propose it. Midhampton he might sell again with ease, if he take his time about it, and Monkworth he and I rather think of keeping up between us, for the present plan, always saving and providing the marriage takes place, is that he shall be my guest at Adriansbad, during the major part of the year, and that I shall be his at Monkworth in the winter, as we are both passionately fond of the chase, and that seat is excellently situated for hunting. You are not altogether correct in your ideas, in my humble opinion, as to the utter seclusion in which Philip will have to spend his life, because there will be little or no reason why he should not enjoy his proper position at Vienna, or indeed in any foreign country, although I see all the difficulties you so very prudently fear will surround his path in England. With us a marriage like the present is a different affair to what it is with you, and the high-born husband can mix without restraint amid a society, which his wife has no claim

at all to pretend to enter, which makes me cordially approve of your most sensible suggestion, that your son should be discouraged in every way from remaining in England. Should it be so, indeed, which I do not at all fear, it is abundantly evident that he must for his own comfort raise his wife to his own station, and to acknowledge a wife, who is not the mistress of his house wherever he may be, is simply ridiculous. The time has gone by with you, when the wife even of a duke is not a duchess as absolutely and unreservedly, however lowly born, as the descendant of your oldest houses; so upon the subject of getting Phil abroad, I am entirely of your opinion. I do not pretend to rejoice at this new match, and it must be a terrible bore for you, as his intended union with Miss Montgomery, and the formal surrender to you of the town residence and a rent charge on Monk-worth, would have been so much more pleasant for all parties; but I fear he will now be very hard pressed for means, for your plan, though excellent in many respects, involves great expense."

"Involves great expense," gasped madame, electrified at this new aspect of affairs, "it is much cheaper on the continent than in England, and if he settles in some quiet place, as he intends, (I am quite sure of that!) he will save immensely, instead of spending more lavishly; I am not altogether ignorant of living abroad."

"Certainly, my dear madame," replied Marcellus, most blandly, "but your over sensitive heart exaggerates most materially the damage to your son's condition in life, which his intended marriage will produce. He will settle in the empire, near my ancestral home, will probably share that home, and by exercise of his wealth and talents will easily achieve rank and station. I should recommend him to render such assistance to

the state in certain matters connected with the raising of troops, and investing in government loans, as to establish a claim to ennoblement and high office, and I may venture to say without vanity, that an adopted brother of mine will hold a position which will remove from all risk of censure his elevation to almost any height which his services may deserve, and that it is not beyond hope that he might live to fill a far more distinguished sphere in his new country than in his old. Nor will the fact that his wife remains at the Castle of Adriansbad, and is never visible in the gay circles in which he will himself so eminently shine, excite the least comment. But raising troops, and paying double service-money to his men, to induce them to serve with cheerfulness, and do credit to his name, is not done for nothing! nor will the purchase of cavalry horses at eight or ten times the regulation price, besides their transport, prove a light item in his yearly outgoings. In fact, if it pleases his Apostolic Majesty to make him Count of Adriansbad, of which I am not altogether without hope, as it is a title in our family, and could probably be renewed at my request, the least he could do, would be to build up the fortifications, and that would take a considerable sum, a million of florins perhaps, or, in round numbers, a hundred thousand pounds. I honestly think it is a pity that he cannot remain in his native country, where he has a good standing, without resorting to such costly modes of purchasing it, but as you say, if his honour be involved there is no help for it; and I think there is no mean praise due to you, if you still exhort your son to follow a course so contrary to the selfish inclinations of a less noble mind."

Never had poor Mrs. Darcy been in such a hobble, for on neither side of the question could she see any hope of carrying out her little plot, which, like most

persons of low cunning, she thought so supernaturally clever, that to conceive it and to put it triumphantly in practice, seemed one and the same thing. To keep Pauline in a subordinate position, if she remained in England, even she was not sanguine enough to hope, as she knew that the mistress of Monkworth or Mid-hampton Hall, even if personally afraid of her at first, would soon get friends to enlighten her ignorance, besides which, Marcellus himself had openly let the cat out of the bag, for which she thought him very stupid, but the mischief was done. As to the plan drawn up for his residence in the empire it had a very disagreeable amount of plausibility. To deny that all the Hungarian had mentioned might be done was impossible, and as she rather overrated than undervalued the ease of purchasing rank on the continent, she was terribly alarmed by the bare suggestion of such a scheme as that which her horror-stricken ears had lately drank in. Judging others by herself, she had made up her mind that the noble Count, who had more titles than estates, at least such estates as brought in any revenues, to whom Rabshakeh's insult might with a very little alteration be very safely applied, viz., that he would find it tremendously hard to find clothes for the men, and saddles for the horses, which he could supply plentifully enough to his master, as far as flesh and bone were concerned, had fixed upon Philip as his monied partner in a vast scheme of ambition, and that the rents upon which she hoped to batten, like a mouse in a Cheshire cheese, would now be devoted to the purpose of rebuilding a foreign house, of which she knew nothing, except that it was coeval in antiquity with the megatherium, ichthyosaurus, and other respectable inhabitants of the antediluvian world, and that it was famous for binding books in the skins of Turks, and holding conversations with ravens, and similar

birds of ill-omen, of which she had been duly informed by the zealous Leila.

If two of a trade can never agree, however peaceable the occupation may be, how could two wolves riving at the same deer, or two corbies each desiring the eyes of the same cast sheep? wherefore Marcellus, of the nineteenth century, suddenly became so hateful in the eyes of Mrs. Darcy, as was his namesake of the seventeenth in those of the abbot of Neunkirchen, when that worthy prelate solemnly expressed his conviction that Satan himself had received the full amount of his deserts, in being compelled to harbour such an unmanageable spirit as that of the great Lord of —.

How to answer this rival in the work of spoliation she hardly knew, for she felt half afraid of expressing her fears, and yet she could not well allow his position to pass unchallenged; but while she was beating about for a discreet reply, Pauline plunged into the discussion with sufficient vehemence to throw her mild expostulations entirely into the shade.

"If you imagine that I am going to live within your territories, Count of —, you are prodigiously mistaken," said she; "or for the matter of that, if you build any hopes of my consenting to leave England for any continuance. As for Adriansbad, I give you free leave to boil me in the hot springs of that good castle, if you ever find me near enough to throw me in; I am tolerably well acquainted with the ancestral virtues of your house, and prefer having not only a stream of running water between me and the demon I fear, but the rolling waves of the British Channel, besides a goodly number of miles of foreign ground. I have no fancy for figuring in a tableau of real life, as 'the unfortunate prisoner devoured by rats in the noisome dungeon.' Your little plan for leaving me alone in the fortress, while your friend amuses himself in Lon-

don or Vienna is a very pretty one, but it requires my consent, and you may rely upon it that you will never obtain that. I have made up my mind to remain in this very neighbourhood, fit up Midhampton Hall, and take up my proper position in the county."

"Did you not agree with me," shrieked Mrs. Darcy, "that a peaceful home in which you could spend your life in tranquillity with your husband was all you had a right to expect? Did you not say that you cared not for wealth, or pomp, but only for domestic happiness and unblemished fame?"

"Perhaps so," retorted Pauline, insolently; "I soothed you as well as I could while I thought you might serve my ends, and as you like hearing all sorts of flattery and nonsense, I fed you to your fill, but if you had a grain of sense you would have known better; and now that I find you taking part with my enemy to banish and slay me, I can no longer restrain myself. In another month you will beg my intercession with your son for whatever you want to get out of him, I tell you fairly to your face; so, if you don't like the match any longer, you may oppose it if you choose, but it is not a scrap of use."

Mrs. Darcy glared at her in speechless anger, the veins in her forehead swelled almost to bursting, and she raised her hand as if in her ungovernable fury she would fain have struck her; then turning away with a gesture of contempt, she made a stiff bow to Marcellus, and flung open the door with a loud crash, as she withdrew with the air of a baffled lioness from the scene of her late defeat. Marcellus turned gaily to his companion as the door closed on the indignant mother, and remarked in a cheerful voice—

"I think I have done you a good turn, Madame Krummacher, in thus unmasking the real intentions of your false friend; for while you were buoyed up by

the hopes of a cordial support from her, I can hardly wonder at your wish to prosecute your claim, believing, as you doubtless do, that it is founded upon justice. It is true, I am not of that opinion, indeed I should be at a loss to imagine how you yourself could entertain it, were it not in accordance with every-day experience, that persons should be lynx-eyed to the points that favour their cause, and blind to those which go against them; but although I am decidedly hostile to your present movement, it is not my part to accuse you of wilful injustice, but with indiscretion and inability to distinguish your true interests, I must take the liberty of charging you most severely. I shall not enter into legal technicalities, which I do not understand, and of which you have probably possessed yourself to a considerable extent, but I wish to point out to you the arrant folly of accepting Philip Darcy, even were his hand entirely in your power.

“ You have heard what his mother purposes doing, and believe me, there will be no small body of supporters of her opinion, and the overwhelming weight of advice given by his friends will be in favour of denying you the honours of the mistress of his splendid estates. To allow you to display your newly-acquired standing in the very face of Miss Montgomery would be an act of weak, ungentlemanlike folly, for which I myself should renounce his friendship for ever, and so would all men of honour, and such persons as those whose good opinion he values. To introduce you into society would be up-hill work, and why should he wish to do it? To make your own way without his assistance would be impossible, for the English gentry are a clique the influence of which is felt throughout the whole mass in which they mix, and who invariably in cases like the present hang together like bees. Nor

will you find enacting the great lady in your own neighbourhood, independently of the society of the county families, any easier, for there will be neither tradesman or peasant, or even servant in your own establishment, upon whom the ban of your excommunication will have no effect. Your custom will be received with bows and smiles to your face, and sneers behind your back; you will be kept waiting in the shop, despite your handsome equipage, while ladies like Miss Montgomery or Miss Mainwaring are eagerly attended to in their carriages, and respect of the most decided nature shown to every wish they express; your charities will be accepted by persons who will gossip over their work of the days when you were no better than themselves, for so they consider the matter to be; and your very servants, on the least provocation, will insultingly tell you, they have lived with real ladies heretofore, and not people pitchforked into an unnatural station by aid of the lawyers. You will find England, in fact, a very disagreeable place to live in; yet will the continent suit you better? You are pleased to say that you would not like to be my guest, for fear of descending to a suite of apartments one story below the cellarage, and I have heard many ridiculous tales of the Aurantii, incomparably more foolish than that apprehension on your part; not that I mean to say that I should ever dream of ordering such a thing, but I really have so many wild fellows about me, who might mistake my wishes, and commit some little error of the sort, while I was out, that I am not altogether free from misgivings myself; yet, permit me to ask, how are you to help being very cavalierly treated, either here or abroad, if we, Philip's friends, chose to welcome his bride to her new position with a sarcastic congratulation of 'You have now attained your desires, may fruition equal in pleasure your

brilliant anticipations !' And to gain what, are you doing this ? is it to obtain money or station ? if so, you are very blind to your own interests ; for one stroke of a pen from you, would obtain a sum which would purchase you both in your own country, to the height of your desires. You shall receive an income equal to that of the very wealthiest inhabitant of the city, of which you are a native ; you shall have a house built you, if there be not one good enough for the purpose, upon the precise model of the heir presumptive to the throne ; your establishment shall equal his, and even if any foreign power should send an ambassador of greater wealth and splendour than the inhabitants themselves, no sacrifice shall be spared to enable you to compete with him on equal terms ; to Madame Krummacher, in fact, shall be cheerfully given all that Mrs. Darcy could even desire in her residence amongst her fellow-countrymen, and every respect shall be evinced towards you, in return for your acquiescence in our wishes, but if you still persevere, you have no right to expect anything but sullen resignation to your extortions."

- " You plead in vain," replied Pauline, doggedly ; " I care nothing for the splendour of which you speak, except as a means to obtain an end, and that grand object is revenge upon Darcy's friends for their conduct to me ; I would rather eat a stale crust soaked in ditch water to moisten it, and see my enemies humbled, than win a throne by playing into their hands. I believe you are quite right in your estimate of the position amongst the surrounding gentry which I shall hold ; but as my part is henceforth hostile to them, I care not for that ; I know the power of money, I know how many cringing reptiles it can bribe to bite ; I know that I can be a thorn in the eyes of those who have despised me ; I know that I can encourage insolence

and ingratitude amongst their dependents, that calumnies will be industriously circulated about them to curry favour with me, and that, in a word, I can embitter all their prospects, and, as I live, Count of —, I will do it !”

“ But why so bitter against them,” asked Marcellus, in amazement. “ I have heard much of their kindness to you, but never of ill will ; even now they pity you, and desire to serve you ; all the hostility is on your side, and if you are on bad terms with them, it is by your own seeking.”

“ Ay,” returned Pauline, bitterly, “ they have been kind to me, and they do pity me ; but in what way do they show it ? by patronising me when I was their humble servant, by sneering at me now. Do you imagine I was grateful for being considered ‘ A good little creature, who knew her place,’ which was Leila Mainwaring’s opinion of me ; or, ‘ A poor devil whose husband beats her, and for whom we ought to do something,’ which is the Colonel’s ; or, ‘ A painstaking, industrious, young person, steadily doing her duty in that state of life to which it has pleased God to call her, who is entitled to every support from the higher classes, from whom God in giving them much, will require a solemn account of their stewardship in return,’ which is Miss Montgomery’s ? Has one of the number ever fairly invited me to that equality to which my birth, education, and mind fit me ? have they ever made a real friend of me ? . Not one. Take even their hostility ; do you pretend to say, that if I were one of themselves they would take it up as they do. Suppose Darcy, tiring of Florence Montgomery, were to fall in love with that little fool, Leila, who is as ready for the reception of his addresses as a charcoal fire for a bit of kindling-wood, how many persons would trouble their heads about it ? Tell me that, my lord the Count,

before you blame me for my hatred towards them for their present enmity. Oh, no! people would laugh then, and say, 'Gay fellow, that Philip Darcy; quite a butterfly, roving from flower to flower. Well, well! one lady's turn to-day may be another's to-morrow; it's no affair of ours.' Is it not so? The whole secret of the unmeasured aversion to my claims, evident amongst the whole body of Midhampton society, lies in their contempt of my humble position in life, and their anger at such a person as I daring to thrust herself into their privileged class."

"I think you are wrong, Madame Krummacher," said Marcellus, gently, "and I entertain little doubt that similar conduct to yours would meet with the same reception, whoever the party might be who displayed it. Persons of the rank you allude to, never do these things—their pride would prevent them, did better feelings fail to do so; but as far as we can judge from the very slight analogy between what is occasionally done even amongst those who make pretensions to superior station and such an unparalleled imposition as yours, the popular feeling generally goes desperately against the lady who forces herself on an unwilling lover, even where strict justice is on her side. But I have neither come to upbraid you, or to deliver a lecture on high principle and delicacy of feeling; my errand is to inquire whether any arrangements can be entered into still, provided that the terms we propose meet your approbation in point of liberality. I have learned from Philip Darcy that you possess a hold on him of a peculiar kind, which enables you to deal with a somewhat higher hand than would otherwise be the case; nor do I grudge you some little advantage from your shrewdness, in the shape of higher terms, but as to refusing to treat, I must beg to say that this is a matter upon which I intend to

have a word to say ; and in acting upon your threat to Philip Darcy, you will take the consequences of bringing on yourself my hostility, which, if I read your countenance aright, as I entered, will not prove very palatable to you."

"Why should I fear you?" gasped Pauline, with an affectation of courage she was far from feeling. "I am in a land where life and property are alike free from the violence of ruffians, whether of high or low degree. If you had me in your own country you might dictate to me perhaps, but not here. You may look from this window indeed upon blue hills in the distance, and a broad river flowing rapidly to the sea, but the hills are not the forest mountains of Transylvania, nor the river your own ancestral Theiss ; nay more, the great Count himself is here simply a foreign gentleman, with a good figure and unexceptionable moustachios, who is making up to the Priory estate, with Miss Leila as a sort of mortgage upon it. The magician is beyond his mystic circle now."

"By my word, fair lady, but you are a brave little woman, and a clever one to boot!" exclaimed Marcellus, "though none too honest, as befits your nation ; but you mistake me, if you imagine that I am threatening you with my own vengeance, or insinuating that you have aught to fear from any emissaries of mine. What I meant was this : you have seen pitfalls for wolves, have you not ? if so, you must know perfectly well that those animals, when imprisoned together in the fatal gulf, mostly spend their last night in tearing one another's throats, and saving the peasants the trouble of putting them to death ; and it struck me, as very possible, that when your good friends find themselves exposed in their illegal proceedings, through your rash declaration of war upon me, they might chance

to turn upon the person who caused the mischief, and wreak their vengeance upon her, in a manner I should deeply deplore, but could not prevent. Now I give you fair warning, that if you purpose betraying part of your husband's secrets to suit your purpose, I shall disclose abundance of others to answer my private ends, and the revelations of the two combined, will be of a startling nature indeed. I have sufficient evidence against Karl Dolchein to drive him out of England, and to what other country he will betake himself, I scarcely know, since his gifts are hardly of a kind to flourish in the New World, and he is better known than loved in the Old. You can hardly wish to bring destruction on the head of him, to whom your vows have been pledged at the altar, bad as he may be—it is not in woman's nature to do that: but, believe me, this must be a war to the knife, if it be waged at all."

Pauline replied by a fit of laughter so hearty and so natural, speaking indeed volumes of the absurdity of imagining that she cared a rush whether her *caro sposo* were hung, drawn, and quartered, or his illustrious life spared, that Marcellus would have experienced little difficulty in discovering the vanity of his trust in her heart relenting, in the hour of trial, towards him whom she had vowed to love and cherish to her life's end, even if she had not uttered a word; but he was not left to mere conjecture, for she poured forth, with the utmost volubility, her string of injuries from her brutal husband, and her thirst for vengeance on him, in terms of such deadly hatred, as to admit of little doubt of their sincerity.

Baffled by her uncompromising malice, which could sacrifice all to the indulgence of revenge, and which neither hope of gain or fear of consequences could turn from its prey, the Hungarian took his leave, and re-

turned to the Priory, bitterly disappointed and utterly despairing of success.

Pauline sank cowering back into her chair, as the door closed after him, and all her bold defiance vanished in a moment. "I feel a cold shudder of coming evil," muttered she; "the hostile tread of the Aurantii has sounded in my ears, and methinks already the dark shadow of their wrath is gathering around me. Yet if I live but a few hours I shall triumph over Florence, and then, come what may, I could meet it with pleasure. But my terms must be made more stringent as to residence in England. Ha ha! it will be a glorious time when I can overtop Florence Montgomery in her own parish and pretend to pity her, just as a few days ago she looked down on me. There ought to be something insulting to her in his mode of rejecting her, properly speaking, but perhaps that may be going for too much. I will be content with what I have got."

So saying, she rose from her seat and drew her chair to the table, on which stood her desk, and in a few minutes was deeply immersed in a letter to Philip, in which she reminded him of the short time that still remained before the stipulated week was past, and assured him, that not another day could be allowed him for acceding to her terms.

And while she thus wrote, Karl Dolchein was closeted with the Prince di Capello in high debate, the upshot of which was, that they parted with mutual vows of the most fraternal love; and an abject message was brought by the Italian to the much-dreaded Marcellus, that his faithful servant would place in the hands of Mr. Owen the most undeniable proofs of the falsity of his late charge against Philip Darcy, and that no pains should be spared on his part to bring his

refractory wife to reason, although the case was almost beyond his control, inasmuch as the lady herself, and not her husband, was the holder of the fatal secret, which was acting as a moral thumbscrew upon his unlucky friend.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE LAST DESPAIRING CRY OF THE DROWNING MARINER.

ONCE more, dear reader, the curtain draws up to disclose the councils of the same pair of friends whose meeting in the rooms of the hard-working student formed the subject of the opening pages of this history. But widely altered is their relative position now, and black Care has moved her seat from behind the toilworn frame of the wrangler-expectant, to make her abode for awhile with the reckless, joyous-hearted Philip, but a few months ago the spoiled child of that fickle jade, Dame Fortune. His spirits, artificially raised by the necessity for exertion during the previous day, when engaged in his friendly mission in behalf of Mrs. Burton, had now disappeared, together with the cause for anxiety; and with the performance of his duty had ended the excitement which had buoyed him up. He felt now all the desolation of reaction, as some high-souled patriot may feel, who, returning victorious to the smoking ashes and violated hearths of his ancestral home, weeps in bitterness over the crushing sacrifice, which in the heat of strife he had borne so heroically. His gallant and unselfish spirit could continue to think and act for good old Charlie even amidst his own misfortunes, so long as there was something to be done; but now that all was accomplished, and he had shaken his friend by the hand in hearty congratulation of his success, and had written a letter of manly good-will to Mrs. Burton, including a jesting

note to Menie, inquiring about the copies of his pictures, he fell into a perfect stagnation of all energy, which it deeply pained his affectionate companion to observe.

"I would to Heaven I were back again at —," groaned he, bitterly; "I don't mean that I want to live there, for a viler hole never was seen, but I wish I were six feet under the ground there! Would that I had found a soldier's death on that bloody field, with my head pillowed on my horse's flank, my broken sword in my hand, and the trumpets of our victorious troopers hoarsely sounding over me. Hermann Rodelein might then perhaps have escaped detection, and not been forced as it were into casting in his lot with the insurgents. But I seem born to bring misery upon all who care for me."

"Nay!" said Charles, soothingly, "I am a standing proof to the contrary, for to me and mine you have been alike the author and the harbinger of all our good fortune; and believe me, dear Phil, nor let the extreme rarity of my introducing texts of Scripture into my conversation make you less convinced how seriously I believe in their bearing on the question, when I do so apply them to present circumstances; the Psalmist spoke from a wise experience, and profound acquaintance with the affairs of men, as well as with a pious faith in God's goodness, when he tells us that in his long pilgrimage from youth to age, he had never seen the honourable and high-principled man permanently forsaken, nor the good path lead to an evil end. And such is my own conviction also, since you have behaved throughout this affair, as in every other action of your life of which I know anything whatsoever, with the utmost good feeling and integrity, and feel assured that all will yet come right, and that you will not be called upon to bear any greater burthen than is

entirely for your own good. And consider also, how many sources of comfort you still retain, which are denied to others ; an unblemished character, an uncomplaining conscience, and the respect of all who know you, including her you love ; and own that you have much to support you ; and that in the numberless opportunities to be useful to your fellow-creatures, which are afforded you through your wealth and station, you may find more worthy ways of burying your sorrows, than in dying for a cause of which your good sense is now ashamed."

" But, Charlie, when you speak thus coldly, though sensibly and truly, you cannot understand my burning love for Florence, or sympathize with a feeling which you are spared, viz., the hopeless separation from all that makes life dear, worse to bear than even the isolation of the grave, for I am doomed to see happiness within my reach, and yet not be allowed to stretch out my hand to grasp it."

" Phil," said his friend, calmly, but shading his eyes with his hand as he spoke, " I have learnt all your secrets, and will now tell you mine. A few months ago you came to my rooms upon a most friendly mission, for which I can never be sufficiently grateful, and by your affectionate solicitude, and almost feminine attention to my nervous state of health, enabled me to triumph in a struggle in which my very anxiety to succeed was, previously to your arrival, fatally defeating its own object. You know how I looked upon that examination as the turning-point of my whole life, but the entire nature of my restless craving for the highest honours the University had to bestow, you do not yet know. You paid me compliments far greater than I deserved upon my filial love, and my desire to supply to Menie the place of the father she had lost ; and you were so far right, that I was mindful throughout

of the claims of that dear parent, who has ever been to her children a pattern of every gentle virtue—all the more attractive for being marred by no sternness or self-exaltation. But I had another moving principle, and I fear at times it was a still greater one. I longed to make a name, and work myself out a destiny, to lay both at the feet of Florence Montgomery! You start in amazement, Phil, but so it was; and now I beg of you to recall to mind how I acted when you told me your incipient love for her, who had been to me for two years the secret pole-star of my thoughts, as may God grant her the power to be to you through a long and prosperous career! Did I bewail my evil fate, Phil? did I cast myself on your generosity, though I knew full well it would not have been in vain? You speak of happiness within your reach, and the inability to grasp it—think then of me, loving as I did, hearing that she I loved was sought by another suitor, whose addresses I felt convinced would be crowned with success, and yet knowing that by one word of mine I could sweep this obstacle from my path for ever. It was no secret to me that had I once exclaimed, ‘Spare your friend this agony,’ Philip Darcy would have acted as Philip Darcy always does—I can say no more—and that from his lips I should have heard the same cheering hopes, the same hearty blessings upon my future prospects, that I now sincerely lavish on his. Again, did I make a long-winded oration, full of heroics and theatrical self-sacrifice, and try to console my wounded feelings by the indulgence of a silly vanity as to what I had done? Not at all! I laughed as merrily at your whole tale, and commented so naturally on the admiration which Miss Montgomery excited in all who knew her, that I disarmed the suspicion which I thought might arise from a lover’s very natural deduction, ‘that to know her was to adore

her.' I encouraged you with all my might ; I sincerely rejoiced that the path of the beloved one seemed so strewn with flowers as hers, and that in surrendering her myself, I was at least to be undisturbed by a doubt of her happiness. And I slept very soundly that night, Phil, and not at all like a lover in a book. I wept a little perhaps over the corpse of my pleasant day-dream, and decked it out handsomely and decorously, and kissed it devoutly for the last time ; but then I closed the coffin over it, and buried it, and went forth to my work and to my labour as a man ought.

" And now, my dear old friend, I will tell you, in the hour of your affliction, what might have seemed rank flattery in your prosperity, viz., why my heart always clung to you with a friendship more like the devotion of the early Greeks, or the bond of union between two brothers in arms of the age of chivalry, than the feeling which now bears that name. Because I saw in you, from the very commencement, the signs of a nature so noble and so honourable in its most unstudied impulses, that feelings in most men the produce of careful training and rigid self-government, burst from you as freely and inartificially, as the waters gush from their mother earth in the unfrequented solitudes. In your first most generous surrender of your claims to the scholarship for which we competed, I admired not so much the thing itself, as the manner of doing it, in which the graceful humanity of a kind heart without a spark of affectation or coxcombry so clearly shone forth, and from that hour I conceived very brilliant expectations of the great things of which such a disposition must be capable. And in all the rest of your life I have remarked the same trait in your character, viz., the ease with which a chivalrous sense of honour and high principle sits upon you ; and have often thought, that is a man who would always

make the better part appear popular and desirable, and who will always have immense influence for good on all who know him, because the right bears so smiling an aspect when he is its champion, and because he shows that it is possible to be at once gay and witty, yet rigidly alive to duty and morality.

"My dear Charlie," interrupted his friend, "you must really be more moderate of your praises, for no human being ever deserved as much admiration, and I least of all. Life has been to me hitherto one consistent scene of prosperity, for my petty hardships in my silly adventure years ago I account as nothing; and what wonder is there, if amid so much comfort I have retained a reasonable amount of contentment, when I had nothing to try my resignation or good humour, with a world that smiled on me, or decency of character, when no terrible privation or pressing necessities have ever sufficiently tested my firmness against temptation? But you, on the other hand, nurtured in childhood as recklessly and thoughtlessly of coming trials as even I, taught to look on study or business as below the notice of a country gentleman; backward at school till boyhood was almost passing into early manhood, and still hankering, as I can plainly see, after the life which you forsook at the call of duty, yet at this time, by your honourable perseverance and ambition, raised to the position of a man of whom your college boasts as the ablest scholar it has sent out for many a century; highly spoken of already as a promising law student, having opened the road to wealth and fame for yourself by your own exertions, how immeasurably superior are you in all respects to a useless hanger-on to good society like myself. And just as much does the purity of your love for Florence excel the selfishness of mine. But

tell me, old friend, do you think your devotion would meet its reward, were I removed?"

He would have continued, but his companion burst impetuously in, with a vehemence more like Darcy's impulsive manner, than his own usual quiet and almost gentle language.

"Oh, Phil! this would indeed be chivalrous self-devotion run mad, if you were really in earnest when you even hinted at such a thing. What right have you to deal with the tender feelings of another, as though they were your own, and as such, subject to your impulses of reckless generosity? You, too, who so forcibly ruled regarding public affairs, that a nation's rights are not the property even of that nation's legitimate master to sell, or give, or will away, to never so casually mention the bare possibility of making the transfer of a loving woman's affections the test of your fidelity to a friend. Shame on such a thought! the time of which I spoke, when I said with perfect truth, that I could have annihilated your rivalry by a word, was before the happiness of that dear lady was dangerously involved in the prosperity of your suit, and when it would have been a personal sacrifice on your part to give her up, not a rash and most short-sighted act of injustice to her, to falter for an instant. About your duty now there can be no doubt at all! to her you must cling, though every man's hand be against you, for evermore, and your pity for me must be a secondary consideration, compared to your fidelity towards her. In fact, to resort to one of your own kind of short but decided expressions of opinion, 'you must not be generous at the cost of another, and having undertaken a responsibility you must go through with it.'"

"Do you then think that I am wrong, in looking forward to the possibility of being compelled to save

the lives of those who shielded me from an ignominious death, by the terrible sacrifice which Pauline demands! and should you hold me guiltless of gross ingratitude, in permitting a blow to fall crushingly upon them, which the surrender of my brightest hopes might avert? Your words, Charlie, seem too reasonable to contravert, yet they lead almost unavoidably to a conclusion, to which I cannot, without further consideration, give my consent. Surely there must be a limit even to the claims of love! there must be a point at which honour must alone be consulted, and its decision final and beyond appeal."

"Were we merely arguing as a matter of speculation or philosophy, Phil," returned his pitying friend, "I might venture, perhaps, to prolong my moralizing into some rather heretical doubts here, though I do not say that they would be more than doubts, such as naturally occur to a thinking man upon every difficult question; but as we are now treating of a practical difficulty, to be dealt with as a reality, and not as a mere theory, I will defer my remarks on that head to a happier occasion, and give my poor opinion on the subject as it stands. I think that Miss Montgomery should be acquainted with the exact details of your unhappy position, and should be consulted as a person concerned, not only as your chosen counsellor, but also as one from whom you wish to have no sorrow hidden, and to whom you may confidently look both for sound advice and gentle comfort in your trouble. What her decision will be is no matter of doubt to us; but I nevertheless think the question should be laid before her, and her sanction to the terrible step obtained, even though it may be an appeal to her honour and good feeling, rather than to her ability to make the sacrifice with an unflinching heart. She will support you with her high and

noble spirit to bear your fate, if so it must needs be, and from her lips you will hear only encouragement to do your duty of gratitude to your friends, and no weak lamentations to unman your resolution. And thus cheered and strengthened for your dreary task, you too must take up your staff as life's pilgrim, and plod your way contentedly through the world, living upon memory, and more than earthly hope, as though your sweet pole-star were separated from you by the river of death, and not by a no less impassable gulf of self-sacrifice."

"And such is your gloomy fate, Charlie, and brought upon you by your friend!" cried Phil, sorrowfully; "would that you had told me your secret earlier, and that I might have aided, not thwarted you in your love. But all that is vain now," said he, gloomily; "you know I am not fond of making long speeches when I feel deeply, but by my word, my poor friend, I grieve at this very moment for your fate every whit as sincerely as for my own." And as he grasped the hand of his old companion, Phil's glistening eyes and whispered "God bless you, Charlie!" spoke more true sympathy, as coming from him, than the most elaborate condolence from the bulk of mankind.


So poor, broken-hearted Darcy bade a hearty farewell to his pitying friend, and mournfully betook himself to prepare for his final journey northward; and at that very hour, Pauline, having finished the stockings she was knitting, thrust them into her basket, as a ring at the door announced a visitor in the shape of Leila Mainwaring, little thinking that they would be taken out again by a rural policeman, and become the subject of that morbid curiosity which impels the bulk of our nation to gloat with greedy eyes over any relics connected with horrors of an exciting nature.

She had woven her scheme in with her work ; it had become a sort of part of it, and now they are both concluded—the stockings finished, and the plot brought to a successful issue—but neither were destined to bring her any fruits of her industry. She smiles to herself complacently, as she settles herself in her arm-chair, to receive her visitor, whom she half suspects will prove to be Phil, and hugs herself in the idea that the game is nearly over now ; that she shall soon see her victim at her feet, submissive to a reign in which vanity is already shadowing forth more day-dreams than love, and that her hour of triumph over the hated Florence is now very close at hand.

Poor, silly Pauline ! in a few short hours Philip shall again kneel beside her who won his boyish love in those innocent days when thou, degraded in feeling as thou now art, wast enthusiastic and pure-hearted ; once more, indeed, thy head shall rest upon his arm, and his hot tears fall upon thy face, in memory of what has been, of the pretty, interesting, clever grandchild of the old astrologer ; but those eyes shall not see him, open though they be, and rigidly staring upwards ; and though it may well be that you two may meet again, spirit to spirit, and with powers of recognition restored, there is no marrying or giving in marriage, Pauline, in that awful world where you shall next behold him you so cruelly wronged on earth.

And bear thy bitter misery with resignation yet a little hour longer, dear, noble-hearted Florence ! and calm thy troubled spirit yet awhile with the comforts which thy simple, unostentatious, primitive piety so bountifully supplies, for the time of thy trial is drawing near its close, and the storm which lours over the head of thy treacherous rival will but clear the atmosphere, and enhance the sunshine of thy immediate future.

Sorrowfully as thou art now shaping out for thy remaining days schemes of gentle usefulness and devotion to the welfare of others, in which nobly to drown the painful memories of thy blighted affection, and stoutly as thou art nerving thyself to prove, in the battle of life, all the braver and more resolute for having no tenderer ties to bind thee to thy home, a far different destiny is now awaiting thee; ere the sun go down, thy heart will be beating against that of him thou hast so fondly loved, with no cruel doubts or fears of separation to damp thy trusting affection; wilt hear his voice whispering to thee, "Mine, mine for ever!" and shudderingly, yet with deep compassion, feel of thy rival's blighted projects—"Afflavit Deus, et dissipanter."



CHAPTER XVIII.

"WHEN NEED IS SOREST, HELP IS NEAREST."

THE account which Leila had heard of the fresh attack of paralysis by which the aged Rector of West Langley had been seized, was unhappily but too true, and the misfortune, in itself severe enough, was rendered yet more terrible by the cause which had produced it. Although possessed of a living of considerable value, and consequently in easy circumstances during his lifetime, he had no private fortune whatsoever, and was compelled to depend entirely upon what he could save, for the provision which he was desirous of making for his widowed daughter-in-law and young grandchildren. He had therefore effected two large insurances upon his life, to pay the premiums upon which he cheerfully surrendered many little luxuries, to which his advanced age entitled him, and one of the greatest comforts of his declining years was to remember how sufficiently he had provided for those dear ones when his personal care was withdrawn from them. How great, then, was his horror, when he received the overwhelming intelligence that his nephew, to whom his business matters had been entirely confided for many years, had never kept up his insurances, but appropriating the money to his own uses every year, had now absconded to America, leaving his unfortunate uncle without a penny to bequeath to his grandchildren.

This terrible shock had come upon him as he returned from making a charitable visit amongst his

flock, and had so unstrung his shattered nerves, that he fainted upon the spot, and being carried to his room, was seized with paralysis in less than an hour. He remained speechless, and almost motionless, during the whole afternoon, and during the early part of the evening, but recovered his consciousness at night and through the long weary hours when men slumbered and slept; but his weeping family watched around him—he strove to use his few remaining hours in consoling and strengthening those who, as he well knew, ere another sun should set, should hear his voice no more. He was dying the death of the righteous, for he had always lived his life, and beautifully calm and serene were the expressions of perfect trust in the Almighty wisdom and mercy which fell from his trembling lips, though these are not the pages in which to embody words of such awfully solemn import. Towards morning, he fell asleep, and so quiet and motionless was his rest, that the watchers almost fancied his spirit fled, and that the gentle, trustful smile upon his face was but the last token of the peace in which he had parted from life; but upon closer examination, a faint breathing was still perceptible, and they anxiously awaited his awakening, not from hope of recovery, for of that they had none, but from a pious wish to receive the farewell blessing of him who had so loved and cherished them in life.

He had expressed a desire that his curate should be sent for in the morning, that he might communicate with him once more in the Holy Sacrament, and bid him a last adieu; but as he was aware that good Mr. Danvers was himself indisposed, and unfitted for night watching or great excitement, he would not listen to any proposition to summon him at the time when he first expressed his wish to see him, but begged that his presence might be requested at an

early hour the next day. It so happened, that the curate was from home when the Rector was taken ill, and could not hear of the catastrophe until he returned, which would probably be very late, so strict injunctions were laid upon his housekeeper not to distress him with the news of his old friend's approaching death, until a night's rest had better fitted him for the mournful tidings,

"He is a good man, and an earnest," said the dying pastor, "and if he heard of my state, nothing would content him but sitting up with me, and that would injure his own health at present. My time has come, and I am willing to go, but he has much labour before him yet, and the cause must not lose such an one, even for a day. I would not willingly have delayed to partake of the greatest comfort which the Church affords, but I can hardly think it blameable in me, if my desire to do so in company with my adopted son and unflinching fellow-labourer in the faith, induce me to incur some peril of not living to receive it at all, rather than supersede his ministration by calling in another. So send for him by nine to-morrow, and let all be prepared."

About eight o'clock the next morning he awoke, much refreshed in mind, but too shattered in body to afford a hope of recovery, and gently inquired if his instructions had been carried out with regard to Mr. Danvers, a question speedily answered by the curate himself, with whom he conversed cheerfully and almost eagerly for some minutes, until, exhausted by his exertion, he again sank back upon his pillow, requesting, as though he felt that his time was running short, that there should be no unnecessary delay in administering to him the last consolation of the Christian's life.

"I would fain have seen my dear young friend,

Florence Montgomery," said he, feebly, "and invited her to partake with me. From my hand she received those emblems at her first communion, and it had pleased me well that she should have knelt by my bedside at my last. But give her the old man's blessing, and bid her remain steadfast in well-doing, for she has a high name among men, and great opportunities of forwarding the holy cause; therefore, great will be her sin, if by relaxing her exertions she give the enemies of the faith cause to blaspheme."

"She is here to receive your blessing," said a gentle voice behind the curtain, "and never will she forget your parting injunction."

And as she thus spoke, Florence Montgomery dropped upon her knees by the bedside, as the dying pastor extended his trembling hands, to lay them on her head, with all the simple dignity of the early church. "Be your own frank-hearted, honest self, my child," said he. "I who have hitherto been so chary of my praises, lest I should sow the seeds of spiritual pride in your young heart, do sincerely laud you now, in parting. Be faithful to your God, and loving to your fellow-creatures, despising none, however dead in trespasses, for by your zealous care you may haply amend them. Doubt not the mercy of any dispensation of Heaven, however apparently grievous unto you, nor despair of the success of any movement in a right direction, for he who commences a good work, conduces to the production of the harvest, though he may not reap the fruits of it himself; neither be led away by sophistries, or carried about by every wind of doctrine, but adhere to the Primitive Church of the apostles and martyrs. And may you experience as many wondrous mercies as I have done, and die as happily."

Upon the solemn rights which followed I shall not

linger, but pass on to the closing scene of all. To a remark of Florence, expressing her sincere sympathy for the terrible catastrophe, which had overthrown the hopes of so many years of frugality and care, the good old man replied with perfect resignation, that he had no fears for the ultimate success of his grandchildren, if they persevered in leading honest and religious lives ; that he had always noticed that friends spring up where least expected, and things turn out better than they at first seemed, to those who did their duty, and that he was persuaded that even this was for the best in some way. "I am sorry for Johnnie's disappointment," said he, speaking of his eldest grandson, "for it was my hope that he also should enter the church, and he had a great desire to do so. Indeed, Mr. Darcy dropped some hints about preferment, which have rather unsettled the boy's mind. But he must look out for an honest calling in some humbler sphere now, and exert himself to be a support and credit to his poor mother."

As he spoke, a soft ring at the house-door was heard, and one of the children creeping downstairs, received a letter, marked "Immediate, to be opened by any of the family," and bearing the huge coat of arms of Sir Magnus Oliphant. The child, with a natural curiosity, looked at the seal as she carried it into the room, and recognising with ease the well-known cognizance of the proud old Baronet, exclaimed, as she put it into her mother's hands—

"A letter from kind Sir Magnus, mamma ! you are to read it directly ! I am sure it has good news of some kind." Nor was the little prophetess deceived, for as Mrs. Shelford ran her eye hastily over the letter, her face lighted up with satisfaction, and then calmed down into an expression of deep gratitude for the goodness of that Providence, who had sent them

timely aid even in the hour of their trouble, and while the aged pastor still lived to see prosperity once more revisit the beloved house.

"Hear what I have received by the post," said she, turning to the dying man, "and learn how soon your pious trust in God's mercy is verified. Johnnie will succeed you in the parish as soon as he is old enough, and Mr. Danvers will remain with his flock at present." The letter ran as follows:—

"My dear old friend—I was appalled this afternoon by the intelligence of your loss through your nephew's dishonesty; and before I had recovered from that shock, I learnt by a telegraphic message from Leila Mainwaring that you had again been stricken by paralysis. I then remembered with dismay that my negotiations about repurchasing my advowson were not completed, and I feared to be too late, but, thank God! I have not been. I hastened down to Lord Trimmington's, and found him at home, engaged with young Darcy's attorney upon this very matter. It appears that he also had received the tidings of your illness from the same quarter as myself, and had taken upon himself to call upon the Earl, to pave the way for a speedy transfer. Augustus Tomnoddy was urging his father to stand upon some nonsensical legal quibble about the want of my authority, but my presence soon put an end to that, for I thrust him aside, and with a single sentence, 'I have come to treat with your father, as one gentleman with another,' finished the whole affair. So my advowson is repurchased, and resold to Mr. Darcy; but as he is not forthcoming to answer for himself, I will tell you all about it. Johnnie will have the living when you give it up, which won't be for ten years to come I hope, but he is to have it then; and if Leila's worst fears should be realized, and

I am never to see my kind old tutor's face again, then Mr. Danvers will be requested to remain at his present post, until my godson is old enough to fill his grandsire's pulpit, and, as I humbly pray, to walk in his steps.

"Be not over anxious about the youngsters. We will erect you a testimonial of our respect of the most agreeable kind to your feelings, by taking care that not one of our excellent old friend's family shall want aid to push him on in life, and I have no doubt that they will all be flourishing people. I would have come myself, to shake you by the hand once more, but I was laid up by an incipient attack of the gout when the news arrived, and all this running about, and storming at young Tomnoddy has done me no good. I hope to see you about in your chair again after all, but if not, receive the thanks of your former pupil for your care of him, and believe in his regret that so good a tutor had not a better pupil. I wish I could look back on life as painlessly as you can, but it is too late for that now, though not, I hope, for turning over a new leaf. Farewell !

" M. OLIPHANT."

The reaction of this joyful intelligence, rendered yet more acceptable from the kindly feelings which so manifestly influenced the writer, completely overwhelmed the feeble powers of the aged sufferer, and a sudden flow of spirits, almost deluding his daughter-in-law into the belief that he was wonderfully improved in health, though Florence who had seen a similar thing before was not deceived by it, was succeeded by a deadly torpor, from which he never again rallied, until the very last minute of his life. He lay for nearly an hour motionless, and perfectly insensible to all around, though he breathed heavily, and his

features worked convulsively, as though in pain ; but precisely as the church clock tolled eleven, the hour at which he was accustomed to attend daily service, when the weather permitted him, he started up, and tried to raise himself in his bed ; whether his mind wandered to his former duties, or whether he was conscious of his position, and simply meant to bless his family before he went, was never known, but his last words were those with which he was wont to dismiss his flock at the conclusion of morning service. He stretched out his hands, and pronouncing in a firm voice, "The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God," went to his place, to experience the glorious truth of that confession of faith.

As Florence left the house of mourning, a little after the death of her old friend, she was met on her way home by Mr. McKenzie, who, with a face of solemn woe, but a tumult of avaricious hopes revelling in his heart, inquired of her how his dear brother was, and if the physicians gave hope of recovery.

"Your anxiety must be great indeed, Mr. McKenzie," said Florence, haughtily, "to impel you to forget yourself so much as to address me, after your unmanly insult to what you believed to be my dying moments. But I can give you the information you seek. Mr. Shelford has exchanged a good life on earth for more perfect knowledge in heaven, and has quitted this world with the less regret, that he was enabled to foresee an useful occupation of his place by his fellow-labourer, Mr. Danvers, until his grandson be old enough to succeed to the duties our departed pastor so scrupulously performed."

"Mr. Danvers succeed to the living !" stammered the parson, fairly driven out of his prudence by this startling declaration.

"Even so," replied Florence; "Sir Magnus Oliphant has repurchased the advowson, and resold it to Mr. Darcy, who, to my certain knowledge, intends to deal with it as I have said."

"I cannot doubt such excellent authority as yours upon such a subject," returned McKenzie, in a sneering tone, "but it must have been a very hurried affair. The laws of Simony are very sharp, young lady."

"Ay," said Florence, bitterly, "they are! and most other ecclesiastical laws very lax: the better perhaps for some of us. But as you very truly say, I happen to know Mr. Darcy's intentions, and you have now heard all I have to say."

So with a slight bow she passed upon her way, leaving the infuriated schemer to indulge in inward execrations, and blasphemous murmurings against his evil destiny, of too fearful a nature to be recorded in these pages.

Meanwhile Florence tripped swiftly on till she reached home, where she was met at the door by Kathleen, with the unwelcome intelligence that Mrs. Darcy had called about half an hour ago, and was at that time awaiting her in the drawing-room. But their conference shall be left to another chapter.



CHAPTER XIX.

"ALL IS LOST, SAVE HONOUR."

"I HAVE called upon you, Miss Montgomery," said Mrs. Darcy, rising in an affected manner from the chair in which she was reclining, with an air of being perfectly at home, and extending three fingers of a primrose kid glove, to welcome Florence in a hospitable manner to her own father's house, "to consult you upon a piece of business, in which I believe we both have a common interest. You can guess my errand, I dare say, and I assure you that I have every wish to be kind to you, if I find you as sensible a girl as I hope."

Florence smiled faintly at this ridiculous address, but feeling no inclination to quarrel with Philip's mother, and not being very fond of scenes at any time, made no comment upon the impertinence of her visitor, but seating herself upon the sofa, with the determination to brave it out, desired the unwelcome intruder to unburthen herself of her mission.

"I am hardly in spirits just now, Mrs. Darcy," she said, "to enter into the plans of charity, upon which I presume you have come, as your son's deputy, to consult me, for I have lost, during the last hour, a kind friend who loved me, and was my best guide from my earliest childhood, such an one as I can never replace, and I candidly own that I could willingly have spent this day in the solitude of my own room. But as you have honoured me with a call, I must not

be rude or inhospitable, and will give you any information that lies in my power, with much pleasure. In what can I serve you?"

"I have not come upon the kind of business you imagine," said madame, with a smirk; "it is an affair between ourselves, and as I have surmounted my early prejudices against you, we shall get on excellently together, I have no doubt. They tell me that your father is a highly respectable person; indeed, that his politics are the principal objection to his visiting at the Castle, which was a great comfort to a mother's heart."

"Really, madame!" replied Florence, "I have so very seldom heard my father's moral character as dispassionately discussed as you appear inclined to do, that I can hardly venture to give an opinion; besides which, there is a little delicacy in commenting upon such family matters, but I always imagined papa to be a man of the very nicest honour, and so a person to be respected; and as to visiting at the Castle, you are partially misinformed on that subject, for my father does occasionally dine there, as he has known Lord Trimmington for years, but as he is rather particular about his society, and the Earl is not very select in his parties, this discrepancy of ideas tends to widen the breach made by their conflicting views in politics."

"I do believe the little demure creature is quizzing me, despite her sober looks," thought Mrs. Darcy, "but I must not let her slip through my fingers in this way. I did not mean that your father was a man of good character exactly," she continued, "but that he was admitted into good society, and that proper families called upon him; of course it is an excellent thing to be honest and religious, and so on, but to a member of a noble family, like myself, it is not every-

thing, so I was glad to find that you were people whom it was possible to visit if one felt inclined."

"Indeed!" said Florence, carelessly; "and may I inquire under what circumstances you contemplate being so disposed? but fairly and honestly, if our present interview is an average specimen of our future ones, I almost doubt whether the gratification of calling on us will be found very reciprocal. Papa, though a very good-tempered man, is an exceedingly proud one, and had he been at home, I think your still remaining where you are would be owing to your sex, more than to any delight he felt in your society. Let me beg of you, Mrs. Darcy, if you have anything to say to me, to word it in such a manner that I can enter quietly and dispassionately into the matter, which is at present impossible, when I am compelled to put on myself all the restraint which a knowledge of my duty to myself as a young lady can impose, to be able to sit quietly by, and hear such unwarrantable insolence."

"Do not allow your temper to get the better of you," remarked Mrs. Darcy, in a patronising way; "I have no dislike to a little independence of spirit myself—indeed I think you are the more likely to support the dignity of your husband's station, for being somewhat tenacious of your own. And as for insulting you, I am so very far from wishing to hurt your feelings, that I have come here expressly to say, that I withdraw my objections to my son's marriage, and if you will listen to me for a few minutes, I can easily show you that our interests and wishes are identically the same."

"I had heard from Leila Mainwaring, that you approved of this iniquitous marriage farce," said Florence, evasively, "but I did not credit it; I thought the child was, as usual, believing the most ludicrous

story, merely because it was the most amusing. Am I to understand, then, that it is true?"

"I support such a disgraceful imposition upon the generous confidence of my own son, the child of my affections!" whined madame, in a voice about as much like that of real feeling, as the language of Will Bowline on the stage resembles the veritable conversation of Jack Smith of South Shields; "that was quite a mistake on the part of my sweet godchild. I was myself deceived into believing that there was some legal validity about the affair, and it is quite possible that I may have dropped hints, involving some apprehension that we should be compelled to endure it, but that was all; and now, I have changed my opinion even on that head, and think that it ought to be opposed with all our power. And as I understand that you have not been altogether as neglectful of my claims on Philip, as young persons entering a higher grade in society than that to which they have been accustomed usually are, I am perfectly willing to consent to my son's marriage with you, and shall leave to his own sense of duty the arrangements for securing a suitable home for my declining years."

"Madame!" exclaimed Florence, indignantly, "this conversation must really come to an end. I have borne your insults a long time, from respect to my father's roof, and also, I tell you very candidly, from consideration to your son's feelings. But there is a limit to all endurance, and to that limit you have now driven me. Times have altered a good deal, Mrs. Darcy since the first interview of which I have ever heard took place between your ancestors and mine; and although I am happy to say, that the course of events has not reduced my house to either the poverty or the obscurity which you imagine, yet I am aware that the line of demarcation between the descendant of the Montgome-

ries and of many of the noblest families of France, and Mrs. Darcy, has been much effaced. I think you rather mistake the nature of my lineage; for it was not under the banner of Edward III., that Hugh Montgomery saw the fatal field of Cressy, nor was the triumphant march of La Pucelle, through her rescued country, a source of vexation, but of rejoicing, to the grandson of the stout old warrior, who likewise girded on his arms to serve the cause of Scotland's constant ally. During the warfare which liberated France from the unjust usurpation of England, a Scotch knight rescued from his well-merited doom a wretched traitor from the army of the Duke of Bedford, whose double-faced perfidy had wellnigh brought him to an ignominious death, from which the compassion of Andrew Montgomery, excited rather by sympathy for his wife and family than for any feeling for so debased a creature, served to deliver him. That traitor rose by his treacherous arts to importance amongst the adherents of the house of York, though his son, walking in his father's steps, was cunning enough to transfer his loyalty to Henry of Richmond, and, by his perfidy, conducted in no slight degree to the overthrow of him usually known in history as Perkin Warbeck. Since that time, his descendants have ever floated with the stream of power, and have flourished accordingly. They have been Church Reformers under Henry, Romanists under Mary, very pillars of orthodoxy under Elizabeth and James, Puritans under the Commonwealth, dicers and profligates under the merry monarch, strictly neutral under his unhappy brother (the political wind blew from all quarters at once in those days, Mrs. Darcy), High Churchmen under Anne, but devoted friends to the Protestant succession, when he of Hanover was firmly seated on the throne, until I find the last scion of them with a blush of lingering shame at such a very

marked renunciation of all his previous associations, falling upon the necks of a deputation from Lancashire to announce the arrival of three millions of operatives, each provided with a blanket and a boarding-pike, and bent on the notable project of besieging London!

“Such has been the career of one family, but of the other I have not so progressive an account to give. His descendents, indeed, were high in military rank and esteem in their native land, until they fell with the luckless Mary, and after that period were men of great repute in France, till their unflinching fidelity to the doctrines of the Reformed Church once more drove them forth to resettle in their native country; since which time, although somewhat shattered in fortune by their loyalty to the Stuarts, they have contrived to enjoy a station which happily removes them from all reasonable suspicion of over-anxiety to thrust themselves upon the alliance of other houses. The knight of whom I spoke, Mrs. Darcy, was my ancestor; the poor degraded creature, who writhed at the feet of Sir Andrew Montgomery, like some wounded reptile, was the founder of your paternal house. You can hardly wonder then at my being a little indifferent to your condescension. As to what you are pleased to say about my marrying your son, I think it will be quite early enough to discuss the details of that union when you are rather better informed as to the fact that it is about to take place. At present you are my only authority for the news that I am so soon to take upon myself the responsibilities of a wife, and I think that, upon the whole, I had better wait to be invited by Mr. Darcy himself, instead of settling the matter with his mother. Should I become a candidate in a contested election, for the honour of entering your family, I shall be most grateful to you for your vote and interest; as it is, I fear that you are wasting your time and

trouble upon a very thankless person, and should recommend you, if you wish to sell your son's hand, to seek another purchaser. Perhaps Leila might be inclined to make a better bargain, but you had better lose no time, or she will have invested in that handsome Hungarian, who is staying at the Priory."

"You must be mad, foolish girl!" replied madame, angrily, "to throw away one of the best matches in England from a question of silly pride about your ancestors. Besides which, don't tell me that you have not made up your plans with Philip, for I know you have; and I know you are so anxious to win me over, that you have agreed to give up the house in town to me, and to allot me an income suitable to my rank; so I came to speak kindly to you, and to assure you of my protection. But if you prefer settling matters with Philip, it signifies very little to me—not that I understand all this mysterious denial of your engagement."

"Mrs. Darcy," said Florence, rising from her seat, "it is impossible that I can be engaged to your son, when, as you well know, it is a disputed point in law, whether he is not married already; but you are not justified in coming here to insult me, for in no way whatsoever have I deserved this slur on my discretion. I have never made any allusion to your future position, should such an event as that to which you refer take place; far less have I made any indirect overtures to you for support, and I must now beg you to withdraw yourself, or to permit me to do so, for this conversation can lead to no end deserving its prolongation. Mr. Montgomery will be at home in the course of an hour, if you have anything to say to him, and the paper-case on the table contains all materials for writing, if you desire to make any more remarks upon

the subject of your visit; but as to my staying to hear this any longer, it is out of the question."

"Do you intend to deny that my son has offered you his hand, and that he only waits for the conclusion of his law-suit to claim you as his wife?" shrieked madame, as Florence neared the door.

The young lady paused, and, in a calm, firm voice, replied—

"He has not offered me his hand, Mrs. Darcy, for he better knows his duty to an unoffending girl, who never sought him out, or encouraged his attentions, until they were unmistakeably pressed upon her, than to take such a step, when his own condition is so dubious; but that he awaits the conclusion of his law-suit to do so I know as well as you, nor do I see any particular reason for either astonishment or blame in the matter."

"And you intend to accept him," sneered the infuriated virago, "you know you do."

"Judgment is deferred until further notice," said Florence, carelessly, and, with a formal bow, quitted the drawing-room, and sought the privacy of her own boudoir, in which sanctuary, however, she was once more driven to bay by a second visitor, whose name, whispered rather than spoken by Kathleen, caused her whole demeanour to change from the pensive melancholy with which she was calling to mind the deathbed of her old friend, to an expression of haughty, almost stern decision of character, well befitting the fair descendant of so many warriors and men of high renown.

Had you seen her, dear reader, as she seated herself in her easy chair to receive her visitor, with the proud smile curling her lip, and her large violet eyes gleaming with the light of commingled defiance and endurance, her right hand grasping the arm of the chair

with almost convulsive vehemence, and the fingers of the left pressed into the palm till the nails left their mark on the delicate white skin, you would have needed no one to tell you who the caller was : you would have known it was "that woman !" a more deadly term of hatred in the rosy mouth of many a pretty maiden than the hissing declaration "mine enemy !" of the most vindictive stage-ruffian, and would have been able, without further prompting, to fill Kathleen's place as usher in waiting, by introducing to the presence of Florence Montgomery the cringing form of Pauline Dolchein.

"You will be surprised, perhaps, Miss Montgomery," said she, "to see me here, after the reception you gave me when I last waited on you ; but I think it is only fair towards you to let you know in good time how we are situated, lest you should compromise yourself in some way from ignorance of facts, which will very speedily be known to all the world."

"I am surprised, Madame Krummacher, to see you intruding yourself upon me in this manner," replied Florence, haughtily, "because I gave too much credit to my sex for self-respect to believe it possible that any woman, situated as you are, could stoop to risk such a contemptuous reception as you must know you richly deserve from me. But as to my treatment of you on a previous occasion, I am so very far from looking on it in the same light as yourself, that I attribute to my misguided compassion at that time your present interruption of my privacy. If you have come to triumph in the success of any part of a scheme, the mean-spirited villany of which it fairly sickens me to think of, I can assure you that your malice is vain, and that you can no more wound my feelings by any insolent rejoicings in your treachery, than you can persuade the sun to withdraw his rays from fear of the witticisms of the bats and owls. You came to me a little while ago

with a shameless falsehood on your lips, to work upon my pity. Upon what emotions do you intend to practise now?"

"You mistake me altogether, Miss Montgomery," replied Pauline, assuming an air of dignified compassion for the sorrows of her rival, which she very wisely considered her best chance of planting her poisoned arrows in that proud heart, "but I am far too sorry for you to be angry, or to return railing for railing. That you should disbelieve my story is not very wonderful, considering who it is whose word is pledged against mine." A bitter smile played on the face of Florence as she thus spoke, plainly enough denoting how perfectly she was of the same opinion upon that head, though hardly from the same reason as her companion intended to infer. "Nay, hear me," continued the German; "I do not blame you for your disbelief in my statement, for I, in my day, have reposed just as implicit confidence in him as you have, and have been just as much deceived. He thought it, doubtless, some years ago, a point of honour to shield my character, and he does not like to alter his tale now, besides which, as he is to acknowledge me as his wife, he very prudently declines damaging my fair fame. And this I will say for Philip Darcy, that he is faithful to those whose affections he has won, as far as not publishing their folly is concerned, and I do not mind owning that you have not as much to fear from his indiscretion as you may anticipate. Your colour rises, and you seem disposed to be angry. Bear with me. I mean better to you, in the hour of my triumph, than you did to me, when you fancied me at your feet."

"I was only wondering if there might not be some truth in the transmigration of souls, and thinking what an extremely small creature yours might have

served to animate," said Florence; "but proceed with your remarks."

"I wish, then, to warn you, once for all," resumed Pauline, "that by to-morrow night I shall have received the open and formal offer of the hand of Philip Darcy, and although I have waived my claim to the title of a wife of upwards of two years' standing, on condition of his immediately making me his bride now, yet that tardy justice I cannot remit, and before another month be passed you will see me the mistress of Midhampton Hall. You wonder, perhaps, at this view of the case, as coming from a person who already passes as the wife of another; but I must now inform you that Karl Krummacher had not only a wife living when he married me, but that the ceremony was performed in London by one of your own clergymen, and that I possess the certificate; so the question of my freedom is no matter of doubt, but can be proved in a few days. I will now explain the whole affair to you, and you shall judge for yourself how far I am justified in the high tone I now take.

"I knew Karl Dolchein, or, as he is here called, Krummacher, long years ago, when I was quite a child, but had lost sight of him for a considerable time, until I fell in with him again shortly after Philip Darcy had been driven into deserting me by his fool of a mother and that match-making old Colonel, who is so fond of you just now, as he has the sense to prefer fighting me with you for his weapon to unmasking his real intentions, and setting up the rivalry of his own little minx of a daughter. By the by, if you had seen what I did at her ball you would not have flirted so amicably with him in the hall half-an-hour afterwards. Upon my word! but this Philip is a very Paris. In one and the same evening he is casting looks of melancholy interest on the victim of his early treachery,

filling her heart with hopes that she is not yet entirely forgotten, and that memory still lingers over the past; next kissing the little queen of the birth-night with more than brotherly unction, and then paying his homage at the shrine of a third lady, begging her to be the goddess of inspiration to his future life, and treasuring up a camellia from her bouquet, as religiously as a Mahometan reverences the besom that has swept the holy stone at Mecca. Nay, not content with that, he drives a mere baby of thirteen the next day into such extatics of admiration that, for his dear sake, she discharges me from teaching her German, with three lessons yet due to her. But as I was saying, Karl.....”

“You lay too much stress upon his affectionate treatment of Leila,” said Florence, almost politely, and coming back from the biography of the respected Dolchien to modern events; “she has been like a sister to him all her life.”

“Perhaps so,” sneered Pauline, “but sisters are not given to colouring up to their ears when their brothers salute them, nor do they usually throw back their heads, with their arms round the fraternal neck, and half close their eyes, to receive that very common-placed caress in proper style. Pooh! I know the light of love in people’s eyes well enough, when I see it, and so do you, and every other girl in the world for the matter of that. But upon my honour, I was quite sorry for you, to see you made such a cat’s-paw of by that artful old soldier, who has played his cards so well, that he has tried the question of the validity of my claims at your expense, and will now palm missie off upon Marcellus Aurantius; not but what he will catch a Tartar there, if he doesn’t take care, for the pretty Leila will find herself presented to the Sultan some day, as a token of regard, if she plays tricks with him.”

"But what about your husband, Karl Krummacher?" asked Florence, impatiently, finding her toleration of the world at large rapidly disappearing, and a strong inclination to be in a passion with somebody or something increasing upon her every minute; "you were just telling me how you again met him."

"I don't know that this has much to do with the present matter," rejoined Pauline, "nevertheless I will reply to your question. I have told you, a minute ago, that Philip Darcy, stirred up to dishonour all his promises by his uncle and Colonel Mainwaring, coldly deserted me to take my chance in the world, adding yet bitterer insult to my grief, by hypocritical rejoicings that I was in a position to push myself in life. But truth to say, I was sick of teaching children, and singing to people in drawing-rooms, who treated me like a learned pig more than a fellow-creature, petting me up and praising me all the time that they were despising me in their hearts; and somehow or other I always did hate the English, and consider the amiable specimens of your nation even more disagreeable than the intentionally rude and haughty; inasmuch as I prefer being insulted to being pitied, and would rather be flogged than patronised. So I set my wits to work to shift for myself, and quitting the family with whom I lived, after openly telling them my unvarnished opinion of their claims to gentility, went up to town, and sought out an old friend of my grandfather, who exercised the same calling, as an astrologer, though being a much wiser man than the poor enthusiast in science, he did not consider jugglery beneath his dignity, and, in fact, turned every penny, honest and dishonest, which came in his way, without any fear of lowering himself in a country which marks its respect for money by calling a rich man a person 'worth' more gold than is easily counted. So I took up my

abode with him, and a merry life I had of it. I have been buried alive, and been decapitated, and fired out of a cannon, and mesmerised times out of mind; and upon my word, if it were not for sheer dislike to you, I think I would go back again to that career, for I was much happier than I shall ever be in that dismal old Hall, waging continual war upon the stupid fools who consider themselves so vastly superior to me. But we have all our destinies and our antipathies, and fortunate indeed is it when we take kindly to our appointed tasks. Now, cats kill shrew mice and never eat them, and ichneumons show much more zeal in breaking crocodile's eggs than in devouring them, at least so I am told by a person who has studied their habits; and I have no doubt that their share in the great scheme of nature gives them pleasure. In like manner, my destiny appears to be to injure you, and I accept my mission with avidity. And as the only way to effectually vex and humble you is to become a fine lady, and take up my abode at the Hall, I must bend myself to the task—but it will be dull work, and I shall often wish myself back at the conjuror's entertainments."

"Why are you so bitter against me?" said poor Florence, in a dejected tone; "I never injured you, and I assure you that I was very sorry for you, when I heard your tale, though I could not take your part in your imposition on Mr. Darcy."

"Partly because it is my destiny, and the impulse is born in me," rejoined Pauline, vehemently; "and I am sure that natural antipathies are an indispensable law of nature, to keep within due bounds things which would otherwise become overhearing and deleterious to the general good; partly because you are a very pattern of that smooth respectability, which I detest, as an unbearable affectation of superiority; lastly, because if I did not lash myself up to a perfect madness

of hatred to you, and so drown all remorse, I could not bear to think of how I have already treated you, and the return I have made for many little benefits. But to my tale. I fell in with Karl Dolchein one night, in company with a young fellow-countryman of his, who sought the aid of my friend the astrologer to read him his future fate, and whom I was requested to assist in entrapping into treasonable practices against the Imperial Government, by lying prophecies of coming glories in a new and regenerated society. To this I readily assented, for one of the greatest comforts to the wounded pride of poverty-stricken but intellectual persons, is to assert over the minds of others that sway which is denied to their worldly circumstances; and when I found myself arbitress of the destiny of thousands, and pulling the strings by which a mighty convulsion might perhaps be wrought, which should make the ears of Europe to tingle, I no longer repined at fortune for refusing me the wealth and power, which would have been so much more worthily bestowed on me than on so many of the grovelling earthworms who possess it. You have once hinted to me that I appeared to have no religion, and no God: you are wrong; I have a faith of my own—which is in the immutable fitness of the despotic sway of intellect; and I do own a Supreme Being, my open defiant rebellion to whom I shall doubtless rue bitterly enough some day; for my sin is not bare unbelief, but rank disaffection to One, who in apportioning high offices, and a leading position to so many dolts and blockheads, has condemned to obscurity and sorrow a mind which I feel to be capable of great things.”

“Poor blinded creature!” said Florence, almost pityingly, for error so terrible and so hopeless excited in her more compassion, for the perilous condition of her who entertained it, than anger or contempt;

“know you not that low cunning, such as you speak of, not only is not necessarily combined with real genius, but is in itself antagonistic to it, and destructive of it? For true intellectual vigour has a pride of its own, even when not chastened by religion, and deigns not to stoop to petty trickeries and poor triumphs over the unlearned. You murmur against Providence for not granting you a higher destiny, yet you own to what ill-use you would have applied it; you confess that increased power in your hands would but have aggravated deception or oppression. You desire an empire, not to rule it wisely and prudently as the Antonines, but to set it on fire, and play the buffoon amid the ruins, like Nero. And do you imagine that this fair world ought to be a mere plaything for the fanciful speculations of erratic genius, however pre-eminent it may be? for against your somewhat whimsical self-appreciation, I shall say nothing. Surely not! those who most strive to advance the welfare of mankind, however humbly, are the wisest, because they see the most clearly the real object of exertion; and be assured of this, that the fox will never overthrow the dominion of the lion, though it struggle to the end of time; the utmost that its cunning can effect is merely to give sufficient trouble to excite the anger of the noble animal—when one stroke of the fearful paw, or one view of the bristling mane, is sufficient to ensure quietude for many a long day. And so is it with the high principle, which, because it does not compete with paltry craftiness, in its own miserable sphere, you mistake for want of intellect. It may be deceived, often and wickedly, since it does not over-readily suspect treachery; it may be presumed upon, in consequence of its being above savage retaliation, and scoffed at through having higher things to engage its attention than the rogueries

of enemies it fears too little to watch with any jealousy ; but when aroused, and in arms, nothing will stand against it ; by its own native force it breaks through the flimsy webs of its puny entrapper, as Sampson burst the bonds of the Philistines, it declares its resolution to be deceived no more, and the imaginary triumph vanishes like a dream. But why do I thus speak ? My thoughts and yours are as fire and water to each other, and it is vain for me to hope to make any impression on your mind. If you desire to finish your narrative, proceed with it ; you shall meet with no more interruption from my comments."

"I puffed up this Hermann Rodelein, then," resumed Pauline, "with visions of such patriotic glory as a rash young enthusiast best loves ; and we spared no pains with our magic mirror, and my mesmeric trances, to befool him to our heart's content ; so Karl Dolchein won him over to all his dark designs, and so compromised him in his traitorous practices, that he could never revisit his native land, save as a rebel in arms. I cannot exactly explain to you why I married the delectable Karl, any more than I could then explain to myself why he married me, but shall confine myself to remarking, that I did consider that step a convenient consequence to being honoured with his confidence during our trickeries upon Rodelein, which threw us much together ; and as I have now discovered that he had a wife living at the time, my sense of his politeness in presenting me with his hand in the church of St. Slawkenbergius is considerably lessened. When the war of Independence broke out, we followed the tide of battle, like the vultures and wolves, and many a time did I fall in with Philip Darcy, who did not recognize his old love in the smooth-faced commissariat clerk in the camp of Arthur Görgei. I was once very nearly betraying him into the hands of the woman-

flogging general, who lay in our neighbourhood; but while I was making up my mind, whether I should leave him to death, and jeer at his dying moments, or whether I should fall upon his neck, and play the devoted, penitent innamorata, he took his departure, and I lost my chance. But it was destined to be so, and I do not regret it; I tossed up a *zwangiger* to decide the question for me, but it stuck upright in the mud, so I knew that I ought to delay taking any decisive step that day, and as I said before, he was gone the next morning, when I had decided upon attending his execution, and offering to take back his love and a lock of his hair to the dear little Leila. Talking of that angel in sprigged muslin, I found out that she was made a kind of telegraph with certain friends in England, and like the Pythoness of old, uttered alarmingly wise oracles, without the least conception of what she was saying; so it struck me when I returned to England, that if I wanted to get at Darcy's secrets, it would be worth while to cultivate her friendship, and by means of that simple addition sum, called putting two and two together, wriggle myself into some things I wanted to know. By the by, how few people can make plain four out of two and two, and yet they call it so easy. But I had a pretty job of it, in my self-imposed sum, for I not only had to put a terrible number of figures together, but to find the digits themselves where I could. However, I succeeded at last, and sucked information out of my darling pupil, as a vampyre-bat does blood from a sleeping sailor, fanning her all the time with flatteries, and making her as proud as a dog with two tails of her enlightened patronage of poor little me. And I had my reward, for I attained through her to the knowledge of the key in which certain letters were written, which put the heads of the Rodeleins and hundreds of others under my heel.

“Now Philip Darcy owes his life to these people—and more than that, their humanity to him was the indirect means of driving them to espouse the popular cause, for they had been detected in harbouring a rebel, and had no alternative, though up to that time the young Hermann had been alone in his disaffection: so if that family be rooted out from the face of the earth, their blood will be on Darcy’s head. As a matter of course, I did not wish to injure the poor wretches, who might have lived to the age of Methuselah for me, had it not been for the necessity of keeping a check on my friend Phil; but as it is, I have been compelled to inform him, that unless he presents me with a written offer of marriage by to-morrow night, I shall be reluctantly forced to crush to death a troop of his friends, whom, I presume, he will not permit to perish ‘without his regret and esteem.’ How beautifully old Isaac comes in just now! So you perceive that I have won the game, or at least, have check-mate in my hands. If you can deny this, I am quite open to any remark you may be pleased to make. I am quite safe of my revenge; for if he give way I shall have a glorious triumph over you; and if not, the crushing sense of his ingratitude and selfishness, the voice of remorse bidding him listen to the blood of them who shielded him crying from the ground against him, will not only poison his happiness for ever, but will teach him to despise you, as the temptation to his offence, and you will become his shame and his dishonour, not his pride and glory. And oh! if one vengeance can be better than another, it will be to see the fine gold of the statue of St. Florence turned into mouldering brass and filthy clay. How have the mighty fallen!” And she laughed, till the room rang again.

Florence shuddered. “I had no idea,” she said, “that any human being could be so heartlessly and

causelessly wicked. That poverty drove men to crime, and that evil passions produced violence and oppression, I knew; but the love of evil for its own sake have I never before encountered face to face. And now leave me; you have won the game as you say—at least, you may safely rely in my perfect acquiescence in your demands, so far as my influence is concerned. And you say well, when you suggest that it would be more refined torture to me, to feel that I had injured, and as it were murdered, the gallant spirit of him who loves me, than to give him up for ever. Think not that I would change places with you, for I would have him look on me as one to whom the law of right is dearer than any earthly consideration, and in the self-same spirit as I would have sate by his side through torture or shame, to comfort and support his innocence, had it pleased heaven to grant me the blessed privilege of being his faithful stay through life; so in this trial also, will I exhort him to bear himself like a man of honour, and to cast to the winds all selfish affections or paltry fear of a few years' sorrow or probation—so shall his spirit rejoin mine, where no forced laws of hard necessity shall separate us, where the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest."

"Farewell, then, heroic maiden!" said Pauline, rising; "if it be any consolation to you to know that you have saved the lives of countless ramifications of the family of Rodelein by your reception of me this morning, I can give you that satisfaction with a clean conscience. For you must know that my principal errand here was to make out whether you had pride enough to really refuse Philip Darcy, if he should still wish to press his engagement with you. Because had I found you faltering, I should have despaired of his firmness against your tears, and should have made safe of my revenge by giving up my fatal secret to-

night—in which case, there would have been as pretty a wringing of necks half over Hungary, as ever welcomed a party of English tourists to some outlandish village on the Rhine, when the shrieks of barelegged girls and poultry, slayers and slain, awaken the echoes of that poetical river with very unromantic sounds. But as you are willing to give way, their lives are safe enough from my ill-will, especially as I am not without hope that some of them may save the hangman a job, by working off my old friend Karl. I think I can make England too hot to hold him; for it is not half big enough for him and me. If so, I venture to prophesy that his days will soon come to an end. I shall hope to see you at the Hall soon, and as you are so fond of clothing-clubs and so on, I daresay I can make you very useful. Ah! I see that you are beginning to cry, so I must withdraw."

"If my tears did rise," said Florence, indignantly, "they were not for myself."

"Oh, no! I know that well enough," returned Pauline, laughing; "you are thinking what a log tied to poor, dear, sainted Philip such a good-for-nothing little scapegrace of a wife will be; and what a terrible example to the poor the having such a woman set over them by force of money will prove. There are more of your opinion! I think so too, and expect that Phil will take to drinking, and all sorts of disreputable ways in sheer despair. Farewell!"

So saying, she swept jauntily out of the room, and as she left the Manor was almost run over at the avenue gate by a horseman rapidly galloping down to the station, who reined in his horse to avoid hurting her in so sudden a manner as to throw it on its haunches, and upon recognizing her features, paused to utter his last ominous warning.

"Pauline Wohlgemuth!" said he, sternly, fixing

his eyes upon her, "the war between us has now commenced. I can guess your object in the visit you have just paid, and I readily concede that you have gained a temporary triumph. Now listen to me. Did you ever hear the message which Probus Aurantius sent to Kaled Pacha, when his two eldest sons were in the dungeons of the unbeliever?"

"No," faltered Pauline; "I have heard many legends of your house, but not that."

"I will tell you then," said he: "The infidel dog, of whom I spoke, railed at the Christian faith of the bereaved father in coarse and insolent terms, and bade him look to his boasted religion for comfort in his trouble. And this was my ancestor's reply: 'I have sought in the Scripture, Kaled the barber! as you desired me, and I find it thus written—God do so to me, and more also, if I make not thy life as the life of one of them by to-morrow at this time.'"

"Do you openly threaten my life, and on English ground?" asked Pauline.

"Not so," replied Marcellus, "I did but mean that you have made an enemy, who is not one to be offended with impunity. Halts for thieves are made of plenty of materials besides hemp, and every hedge carries a shaft for the lance of an Aurantius." So saying, he shook his bridle-rein, and was once more at full speed upon his way, while Pauline watched him up the hill with a straining gaze, as if half-inclined to call him back. On the summit of the ascent she saw him halt, and turn round in his saddle, with a sweeping wave of his hat in sarcastic adieu. A blinding flash of lightning seemed to turn man and horse to fire, and when she once more looked up with dazzled eyes, Marcellus Aurantius was gone, and the terrific peal of thunder which followed, seemed like some awful accompaniment to his parting warning.

"If I could respect any human being, after the mass of absurdity I have lately witnessed," muttered Pauline, "it would be that young Count; for he has the power of taming men by the eye, and striking panic into the heart, where no real danger exists, to an extent I never before saw equalled. He has almost cowed me, which is certainly no easy task; and futile as I know his threats to be, my blood runs cold when I think of them. Heavens! how it lightens, and not a drop of rain. The clouds open and shut, like portals to a lake of fire! Were I superstitious, I might almost fancy that lurid splendour the harbinger of coming Judgment. Pooh! what nonsense the fear of that day is; for will not the hour of death prove exactly the same thing to all of us?" And forcing her thoughts back to her web of scheming, she walked rapidly towards home.

Rightly had Pauline spoken of the hour of death, but as rightly had she recognized in the fearful grandeur of the lightning the summons to her own place.

CHAPTER XX.

THE WITHERING OF "THE GREEN BAY TREE."

"WHY do you turn your face away from me, dear Floss, and shrink back at my approach?" said Leila to her friend, as the latter, avoiding her proffered kiss, motioned her to a chair, instead of greeting her arrival with her usual cordiality. "How can I have offended you? for we parted the best of friends yesterday, and not a thing has happened which should change our feelings to each other. You shake your head, and the tears start to your eyes. Do tell me, Florence, and I will beg your pardon on my knees, if I have involuntarily injured you."

"You have not injured me, Leila, and I do not deny your right to pursue your own plans," replied Florence, gravely; "but yet I think it would have been kinder to have told me, when I opened my heart to you, that yours were the very last ears to whom my secret should have been confided. Why not have said, weeks ago, that your father desired Philip Darcy for a son-in-law, and that your own heart went with his wishes? There was no harm in this, it was no more than one might have expected; but why let one who was very fond of you, expose her weakness before you? And yet, after all, I have no wish to quarrel with you, my child, so, if you still desire to be the same to me as before, I will readily return your love." And taking Leila's hands in hers, she drew her towards her.

"Stay, Florence!" said Leila, "I should like to

know what this very strange speech means, because, in plain truth, I am rather tired of having this unjust accusation cast in my teeth. Three times in little more than as many days have I heard this—once from Mrs. Darcy, which amused me exceedingly, as she is a great fool, and only fit to be laughed at; again, from Marcellus Aurantius, which did not exactly displease me, for reasons which don't matter; and now from you, which I own both grieves and offends me. What does it all mean?"

"Perhaps you are not aware of how closely you were watched at your ball."

"Oh, yes, I am!" answered Leila, rather pertly, "I was abundantly quizzed about that, I assure you. Alexander McLeod informed me, that if the crackers at supper had gone off with as brave a smack as something else did in the hall, they would have done more credit to the confectioner, which is a great shame, for I should no more think of making a noise in kissing, than in taking soup, but that is what he said; and Captain Devereux said he should always break his dance engagements with me, in hopes of being bribed to behave better, and altogether I was finely teased for that little eccentricity."

"You seem to take being kissed before the company very coolly," said Florence, recovering her good-humour, being quite reassured by Leila's manner; "it was nothing new, I fear."

"Oh, dear me, no!" said the little puss, merrily, "not at all; but he was not the culprit this time, for I took a mean disadvantage of him, and caught him quite off his guard."

"I think, my dear Leila, you are getting too old for these wild pranks," said Florence, rather gravely, "but I might have known that you were the same mad-cap as ever, if I had not been in a humour to

find fault with everything to-day. And a spiteful remark I had just heard on your behaviour then, grated on my feelings now, more than it ought to have done ; but I hope you will make allowances for the worried condition in which I feel on this luckless day."

" Ah, yes," sighed Leila, putting her arms round her friend's neck, and resting a very crimson face on her shoulder, " it is a wretched day indeed, and I felt so lonely, that I came up to see you for company's sake : for although you have so much upon your mind, you are always so firm and so wise, that you can bear up against great sorrows, better than a silly child like myself against much lighter. I am so miserable, Floss, and yet I am quite ashamed of being so, because I think Marcellus considered me only a sort of plaything ; but now he is gone, I am so desolate that I care for nothing. You accused me of liking to be kissed by Phil upon my birthday : oh, dear ! if you did but know how strange I felt, when Marcellus kissed my dog's head, as I held him up in my arms to say ' good by ; ' for I wondered whether he really was fond of the little thing for my sake, and I thought that he would seem sorry to leave me ; but he did not, for he laughed quite merrily, and said he hoped to find me as full of fun when he came back, and not turned into a little woman. And he would not have said that if.....I mean, that Phil does not wish you to be a child, Floss, and play ridiculous antics," and poor Leila sobbed outright with penitence for her extreme youth.

Florence, with her usual good humour, attempted to comfort her, and in good truth there was something so pitiable in the genuine desolation of that customarily merry face, and the very fact of the rarity of tears being seen in those sparkling black eyes,

made their present condition so much the more lamentable, that it would have required a sterner mind than that of our gentle heroine to have denied her compassion. So her secret sorrow was gently extracted from her, that her cavalier was going to fight a duel with some wretched Italian, who would be sure to take some unfair advantage of him, and murder him to all intents and purposes, so that she never expected to see him any more. To which dismal tale of woe Florence could only reply, that from what she had heard of the Count, he seemed to be a man far more likely to exterminate any given number of Italians who came in his way, than to be killed by one himself, and that he would doubtlessly take care to have his trial by combat arranged upon equal terms. Whereupon Leila cheered up, and following in fancy the prowess of her knight, wandered so far from her original woes, as to express a hope that Marcellus would not unnecessarily imbrue his hands in the blood of his puny antagonist. She then, in her turn, began to inquire into the condition of Florence's affairs, and resolutely disagreed with her friend as to the course which Philip ought to pursue. She vigorously maintained that Herman Rodelein, were he himself to be consulted, would much rather die honourably, and like a gentleman, than owe his safety to the life-long misery of his friend, and the triumph of a little wretch like Pauline over dear Floss, and that Phil was no true lover if he gave up his lady for all the lives in the Empire. "And I don't believe," she concluded, "that Pauline dare put her threat into execution, for her own life would not be safe from the torrent of rage which such a deed of treachery would excite amongst the many desperate men connected with the cause. I should certainly advise Phil to set her at defiance."

But not so thought Florence, with whom the duty of gratitude stood foremost, and who loved Darcy's honour more than his happiness. She argued at some length upon this topic, till her still-enfeebled frame became exhausted with over-excitement, and before she could reach her bedroom, to which she instinctively directed her steps, when past the power to tell her companion her increasing illness, she fainted in the arms of Leila, who was barely in time to save her from falling to the ground.

Kathleen being hastily summoned, and Dr. Seaton sent for without delay, Florence was laid upon her bed, and Leila, finding that it was considered better that the poor invalid should be kept as quiet as possible, and that her presence would rather excite than soothe her, took her departure, and hardly knowing why, walked dreamily on towards Cadstone, and found herself ringing at Mr. Whiting's door, and asking for Madame Krummacher, before she had made up her mind what to say. I shall not delay the reader with a conversation, which, although new to the parties holding it, would be, to a person acquainted with the previous conferences of our different characters, little more than a repetition of arguments already discussed in their proper order. The bulk of what Marcellus had said to Pauline before, was repeated by his confidante now, as were also the lady's answers in return; the insults which had been heaped on Florence by her rival were once more revived, and, of course, vigorously combatted by her antagonist, who held her own bravely enough, as to the absurdity of a German adventuress fancying that she was going to trample upon the society of —shire; in fact, the whole debate has been more or less mentioned before in some portion of these pages, and it would only be wearisome to repeat it.

But after a long and somewhat stormy debate, Leila lost all patience, and very imprudently hoping to bring matters to a crisis by defying Pauline to do her worst, under the impression that she could easily draw in her horns if she found her unmoved by her threats, hinted that she had learnt enough from Marcellus to be able to warn the principal parties concerned in her fatal secret of their danger, and that she was determined to do so, feeling convinced that she could thus sufficiently neutralise the nefarious designs of the traitress, to free Philip Darcy from his obligation to accept her terms. But she saw, when too late, how terribly she had overshot her mark, for Pauline immediately started up, and exclaiming, "If that be the game you are playing, I have no time to lose," abruptly quitted the room to make her preparations for taking the first train to town. In vain did Leila follow her into her bedroom, imploring her to change her purpose, and protesting, with tearful eagerness, that she would take no steps in the matter but would leave it to the principals to settle amongst themselves. The enraged Pauline would not even listen to her; suspicion once aroused, could never be again allayed, and her firm belief now was, that Marcellus was already on his way to rob her of her revenge. Disregarding, therefore, the entreaties of her miserable companion, she hastily completed her packing of a small travelling bag, ordered Whiting's boy-of-all-work to accompany her to the station, and set off on foot at a brisk pace to catch the train, not risking the delay of sending for a fly. The involuntary cause of so much mischief followed her out of the house, to endeavour to win her over even yet, to forego her purpose, but before she could so much as obtain an answer from her, a third actor suddenly appeared upon the scene. As they struck into the footpath,

which led by a short cut from Whiting's house to the station, they encountered Krummacher, who was rushing with impetuous steps towards the town, with an excited air and angry expression of countenance, as though bent upon some errand of serious importance, and no agreeable nature, and who, seizing his wife by the arm, demanded, in a voice trembling with a strange admixture of fury and apprehension, whither she was going, and what was the intention which she was so vehemently implored to abandon by her half-frantic companion.

"I was coming over to you, vile, treacherous serpent that you are," said he, in his native tongue, "for I have learnt that you are plotting my destruction, and are even now upon your way to betray secrets to the hated government, which would be like setting fire to the train which will blow a whole nation to atoms, and must necessarily prove my utter ruin. Speak, woman! are you not at this very moment on your way to the embassy? You change colour; you cannot deny it."

"I am so, Karl Dolchein," said Pauline, boldly, and struggling to release herself from his grasp; "why should I spare you or yours? You first acquainted me with sorrow and shame—you taught me to love fiery excitement to drown thought—you made me what I am. Now tremble at the work of your own hands. In less than twenty-four hours the mine will have exploded, the intelligence so long vainly sought will be in the hands of the ambassador, and Karl Dolchein will be a vagabond upon the face of the earth, branded like another Cain, but his mark will not be to preserve him, but to deliver him into the hand of the enemy and avenger. By to-morrow night you will be in an English gaol, for certain little affairs which I shall recommend to the favourable

consideration of the police; or, if you fly, you will indeed require an obscure hiding-place, and a good disguise, to shield you from the pursuit of those who will hunt down, as they would a wild beast, the wretched traitor who has made so many homes desolate. Think not that I threaten you with your own countrymen—they can fight, but they cannot murder. But what think you of the treatment you are likely to meet with from.....” and she finished her sentence with a mysterious signal on her fingers, in lieu of words.

A deadly expression passed over Krummacher’s face as she concluded, which made Leila’s blood curdle with horror, but Pauline observed it not, for she was gazing on the ground, and apparently buried in her own thoughts, and when she again looked, a sickly smile had succeeded the heavy scowl.

“I dare say we shall manage to make it up, somehow, Pauline,” said he; “we have had many a sharp encounter before, and been excellent friends afterwards. We have too much in common to quarrel very long, and if I cannot very well do without you, you would often enough have made a poor figure without me. Indeed, if I were to rip up old grievances, there would be plenty of opportunity of making myself feared by you in the handsome home you fancy you are winning. I wanted indeed to have consulted you, before you compromise yourself too far, about No. 5 of the papers in Whiting’s hands, for if it turn out that you cannot marry Darcy after all, you will have got yourself into a pretty mess with your precious letters. But as you are so bitter against me, I need not trouble myself any further; only I will tell you thus much.....”

“Don’t talk before the child!” shrieked Pauline, “for she understands German, and Magyar too. If

you have anything to say, come a little on one side. I'll trouble you to leave me, young lady," she continued, turning rudely to Leila; "but your friends shan't get off, I can tell you, I can telegraph enough to stop that."

"For heaven's sake, Madame Krummacher!" exclaimed Leila, "do not follow that man; he means you some mischief I am sure, I can see it in his cold, malignant eye."

"Pooh, child!" returned Pauline, scornfully, "I am used to blows, if he does strike me, and people are not murdered now-a-days on an open common, in broad daylight, and within a stone's throw of a manufacturing town."

Leila was still uneasy, but did not follow the wretched pair any farther, but remained stationary, gazing at them with fixed attention. She heard their voices in eager debate—the man's was that of a person trying to coax his companion over to something, the woman's was that of intense hatred and contempt. Suddenly they stopped, and in answer to some question from her husband, the shrill, shrewish voice of Pauline exclaimed, with a harsh, unpleasant laugh, "When I have seen you grace a gallows, Karl Dolchein, and not till then."

Krummacher, or Dolchein, whichever one may choose to call him, raised his arm high above her head, being a tall though not powerful man, and with one blow dashed her to the ground. Before the horrified Leila could move from the spot, to which she seemed rooted with terror, he had kicked his wretched victim so repeatedly over the head with his thick, heavy boots, that her face seemed one undistinguishable mass of blood and mangled flesh, but not a cry escaped her lips, to betoken the presence of life. Meanwhile, the murderer neither fled, nor

evinced the slightest inclination to molest Leila, when, recovering her self-possession, she rushed to the scene of horror, uttering shriek upon shriek for help, which must needs bring aid in a very few minutes, so close as they were to the outskirts of the town. Even when, with a desperate courage, nearer akin to the madness of dismay than deliberate bravery, she seized him by his coat, he never attempted to escape, but burst out laughing, and taking her hand, proceeded with her towards the town, singing and dancing, as if delighted at his performance. Leila preserved presence of mind enough to humour the wretched creature, whom she presumed that sudden horror had bereft of reason, and as she delivered him quite unresistingly into the hands of a body of men, who hearing her screams came hastily forth to her assistance, she begged them to be gentle with the poor lunatic, and to exercise no unnecessary severity towards him. As she spoke, however, a gleam of sarcastic intelligence flashed across the face of the culprit, which at once excited her suspicions.

"I was wrong," she cried; "hold him fast, for his madness is all feigned. Karl Dolchein, that look shall not be forgotten when you stand upon your trial." And she fell back in hysterics in the arms of the bystanders.

Meanwhile, the down train, which crossed the up at Cadstone, had arrived at the station, and the news of the murder having reached the travellers on the platform, a loud conversation was going on upon the exciting topic.

The window of a first-class carriage was suddenly lowered, and an anxious voice inquired what was the terrible intelligence of which they spoke.

"A German, named Krummacher, has murdered his wife, and desperately wounded Miss Mainwaring,"

said a factory girl, magnifying the list of horrors, as such people are liable to do.

With one bound Philip Darcy sprung from the carriage, and thrusting aside the surrounding throng, ran at full speed to the dense crowd upon the common, which was plainly visible from the station, and where he rightly imagined that the catastrophe had taken place. Passing Leila, whom he easily discovered to be unhurt, he fell upon his knees beside the murdered woman; and with the sight of that poor mangled body came back such a tide of old remembrances, that he covered his face with his hands, and sobbed aloud. But we will drop the curtain upon the melancholy tableau.

CHAPTER XXI.

A LOUBING MORNING BRINGS A FAIR SUNSET.

MEANWHILE, Florence Montgomery was arranging the plans of her future life, having seen her brightest day-dreams of happiness fade into utter desolation through the disclosures of Pauline, with all the courage of that house of brave men and virtuous women to which she belonged by birth, and all the sound appreciation of the beauty of practical usefulness engendered by the careful training and solid education of her childhood. How changed from the joyous, kind-hearted, but too impulsive maiden of one little year ago! how different from the smiling face, which seemed to have no thought for the cares of the cold, hard world, but to be born to revel, like some lovely tropical bird, amidst sunshine and flowers, during the whole of her gay and sorrowless life, was the pensive intellectual countenance of the high-hearted girl, who, sick at heart, and but half recovered from her late illness as she was, combatted so bravely the entreaties of her father to seek, in change of air and scene, the renovation of her failing health.

"Urge me not to such a step, dear father," said she, in answer to his repeated remonstrances, for pride and sense of duty alike rebel against the advice. I could not bear to think that Mr. Darcy's marriage had been made by me a source of such avowed disappointment, that I must needs withdraw, and hide my head in obscurity before the new comer at the Hall. But it is not only of self-respect that I now speak, but of

far more important considerations. Can I desert my old neighbours just when they will probably want a kind protectress the most urgently? I know the spirit of this woman but too well from her last conversation, and I can easily foresee the turn her conduct will take, and how indefatigably she will labour to counteract my exertions of the last three years, and to overthrow everything and everybody convicted of having been favoured by me. It will be quite enough for her, that I respected the worth of a person, to ensure her hatred and persecution, and I know, as well as if I had seen it put into execution, that her whole object in life will be to pull down what I so loved to build up. Therefore, I am steadily purposed to remain at my post, to defend my own authority, and though I die in the attempt, I will not flinch from my duty."

"My dear child," responded her father with a mournful smile, "you overrate the injury such a person can do, and, in all probability, her desire to effect it besides. She will doubtlessly be contented with enjoying her newly-acquired wealth, and giving herself *parvenu* airs of grandeur, without a thought of interfering in these other matters. And even if she did attempt such things, we are perfectly able to take care of ourselves, and I pledge you my word that all your charities, and all your cherished schemes of improvement, shall receive my best attention during your absence. You may safely leave this to me."

"Nay, dear papa," persisted Florence, "do not think me disrespectful, or insensible to your kindness, if I still venture to express a wish to superintend these things myself. I am sure you would exert yourself to the uttermost; but no man, be he never so well disposed, can successfully counteract the wickedness of a wealthy but unscrupulous woman. Petty intrigues, through which I should see at a glance, would

pass unnoticed by you ; in fact, you would never hear of them, for you could never win the same confidential trust in your sympathy, that is willingly extended to me. There are numberless things which none but a woman's heart, or a woman's hand can do, in which you would stand no chance at all with your cunning but ill-principled antagonist ; and all your most energetic endeavours to carry out my wishes, would only end in creating a double-dealing body of villagers, cringing to her one day, and overwhelming you with assurances of fidelity another. Moreover, as a mere matter of gentlemanlike courtesy and gallantry, your hostility to her intrigues would have to be very politely veiled, while my opinion may be, and I assure you that it will be, unmistakeable enough. Many families would probably call upon her, for the sake of what they would call peace and quietness, were I absent, who will never venture upon doing so, while the daughter of Mr. Montgomery of the Manor keeps resolutely unfurled the banner of open opposition to the pollution of our society, by the introduction of so vile a creature ; and the bulk of the persons from whom she might reasonably hope for abundance of homage, the shopkeepers, &c., of the neighbourhood, will think twice, before they try the experiment of incurring the interdict of a person, who, however unworthily, is considered the giver and withholder of standing among the young people of our surrounding society. I never gloried, in the wildest moment of my vanity, in the power I have attained over such nonsense as provincial fashion, as I do now, when I hope to put it to a really good purpose. It may be attributed to a bad motive, and I dare say it will be by many persons, but my own conscience is clear, and I am quite determined to drive out from our peaceful neighbourhood such a scourge and annoyance, if any

exertion of mine can effect it. And that by bravely stemming the torrent I can attain my object, I have no doubt at all. I could not bear to think that my poor scholars were cringing to such a person for her patronage, or suffering for their honesty, or that their minds were being corrupted by the cruel necessity to put on a smiling face, when their hearts were full of righteous indignation at the infamy of her whose favour they were seeking. No, my dear father, here must poor Florence Montgomery remain in her double identity, a Sister of Charity, in all but the name and dress, to her poorer neighbours; but the haughtiest assertor of her station and character, as regards her refusal to acknowledge the claims of the *parvenu* at the Hall, that ever insisted upon the due privileges of high birth. How long my health may bear the stress of this conflict of emotions, for I seek not to conceal from your loving eyes the agony I endure, is more than I can possibly foresee, but I have little fear of not playing my part long enough to have nipped in the bud the most imminent danger which I apprehend, and to have established a firm barrier against the most fearful evil which can fall upon the labouring classes, viz., the dominion of vice, supported by the means to bribe, or the influence to compel a subservience to its demands. And perhaps my memory, and the sanctity of the grave, in which my faults will be forgotten, and only my good-will to my neighbours be remembered, may render me, when dead, an even better rallying point than living; and my little Menie, grown to woman's estate, shall fill, as the adopted sister of 'poor Miss Florence who is gone,' an even higher place in the affections of the villagers than I have done myself. And thus, my work put into proper training, I may go to my grave in peace, having borne me to the last like one anxious to do well, how-

ever imperfect in both knowledge and practice, and having striven to acquit myself in the battle of life like a descendant of my noble ancestor, of whom it is recorded, that 'he lived a very true and gallant gentleman, and died in his harness full knightly.'"

In vain did her father oppose her resolution with all the arguments in his power; the horror of Pauline's polluting influence amongst her old clients was so overpowering, that she could look upon the matter in no other light than a shameful desertion of her post, were she to leave the Manor, even in search of health. The consultation was still going on, when a carriage rolled up to the door, and Colonel Mainwaring was announced, who with a serious countenance, and a demeanour indicative of having news of startling importance to convey, desired to see Mr. Montgomery immediately on matters of pressing business. He was accordingly shown into the library, under the impression that his visit was upon some private concerns, which were not meant for the ears of Florence. But hardly had she settled herself, to attempt to read, after her father had left her, than the door was opened, and both gentlemen entered the room, followed by Dr. Seaton and the faithful Kathleen, who with a face as white as ashes, and breathing hard through her clenched teeth, took her station behind the chair of her young mistress, with her eyes fixed on every movement of the worthy physician.

"I have come to bring you strange intelligence, Florence," commenced the Colonel, "and I scarcely know how to break it to you best. But prepare yourself for news that will startle you very much, although I think I may say, without undue severity upon the unhappy lady of whom I have now to speak, that it is a matter more fitted to produce a solemn impression of awe, than absolute grief at the catastrophe

itself. Philip Darcy's bondage to Madame Krummacher is over for ever. His despairing declaration, that though earth afforded no justice and no refuge to him, God would eventually judge between him and her, has been fearfully verified. That misguided victim of ill-used talents and blind thirst for revenge is dead: murdered by her husband in the open face of day upon Cadstone Moor, before the very eyes of my daughter Leila, and I now come to inform you of this fearful change in your prospects." Here the speaker ceased, for Florence had relapsed into insensibility, struck with horror, and the conflicting sensations of pity and sorrow for her miserable rival, combined with an overwhelming sense of her own deliverance from a life of mourning.

When she again recovered her consciousness, Philip Darcy was kneeling by her side, his face hidden in the cushions on which she was reclining, but his whole frame trembling with irrepressible emotion. She gently laid her hand upon his head, and at that light touch he raised himself, and with a glance of unutterable tenderness gazed in those loving eyes, so pityingly and confidingly turned on him.

"The snare is broken, my own sweet Florence," whispered he; "but, oh, I cannot rejoice. My memory will yet go back to the old days of boyish enthusiasm, and I cannot wholly forget, in what that poor creature had become, what she once was. Suffer me, then, to mourn awhile for that brilliant mind, so terribly defaced by evil society, and bad counsellors, and think me not untrue to you, if I shed a tear for the shattered idol of many a bright aspiration. Had I behaved differently and not sought her love, it may well be that she had been another and a better woman, and might have led a peaceful and honoured life in some humble home, lighted by domestic affection, and

honest ambition. I am not myself blameless enough to cast the first stone at her. Blame me not, then, that I deeply deplore the terrible means by which our deliverance has been effected."

Florence replied by a gentle pressure of the hand which so fondly held hers in its grasp, and the silence remained unbroken for several minutes, until Dr. Seaton peremptorily announced that the visit must now come to an end, since his fair patient must be no longer exposed to the excitement of a lengthened interview, at which unwelcome intelligence Phil was compelled to leave his delightful post, and prepare for his return to the Priory.

The other gentlemen very discreetly withdrew first, giving their young companion a little law, upon the score of his farewell taking a longer time than theirs; and Kathleen also, being imperatively called away by some urgent necessity of her own invention, fled swiftly upstairs to her own room, thus permitting the adieu to be exchanged in perfect solitude. So our young lovers, now for the first time honestly confessing their mutual position, parted as lovers ought, lingering at the door, with the lady's face resting upon her companion's shoulder, and the pretty hands coyly struggling to free her waist from the tyrannous imprisonment in which those encircling arms confined it, but with very indifferent success, until a sonorous "Are you ready, Phil?" from the Colonel in the hall, produced as instantaneous an effect in procuring her release, as though the gallant officer had still been on active service, and Darcy had been a sentinel within an ace of being caught larking upon guard; when, with a parting embrace, to which the fair Florence submitted with a better grace than before, upon the strength of its being the last offence, Phil tore himself away from his lady love, and with all the sweetness

of Mount Hybla still upon his lips, sprung into the carriage in which the Colonel was already seated, and was rapidly rolling towards the Priory, ere he was half aware of the present state of affairs.

"The trial of that villain Krummacher will not be delayed very long," said the Colonel, after a pause, "for the assizes are fixed for the 28th, and it is the 16th already; unless, indeed, it be delayed from the time for preparing his defence being considered too short. I heard that he pretends madness; if so, exertions will be made to procure some postponement.

Darcy started. "Good Heaven!" said he, "how singular is this coincidence. To-day, then, was Pauline's birthday, and this very day three years ago, the old astrologer foretold that our acquaintance would end in the destruction of one or both of us, unless we speedily put an end to our ill-omened intimacy. And even so has it proved in sad reality."

CHAPTER XXII.

KARL DOLCHEIN HAS "A METHOD IN HIS MADNESS."

SPRING had now lapsed into summer, and the trial of Karl Dolchein, postponed from the assizes immediately succeeding the commission of his crime, to a season admitting of sufficient investigation into the truth of his professed insanity, was now close at hand. The verdict of the jury which sate upon the body of the unhappy Pauline, could never have been a matter of the slightest doubt, and the murderer being already in custody, the preliminary steps towards his conviction were completed in an extremely short time, leaving the only question really at issue, the truth of the mental aberration, which alone could save him from a felon's death.

During the time which has passed since the events recorded in the last chapter, little has occurred to the actors in our tale, deserving any lengthened notice; a succession of calm and happy, though adventureless days having now replaced the wearing anxiety and cruel suspense of our young lovers. The improvements at the Hall, indeed, were being carried on under the open superintendence of its future mistress, and no concealment of the event which was to take place the ensuing summer was considered necessary; but although the enamoured pair were doubtlessly interested beyond measure in their own plans for adorning their home, and putting their affairs in order, the reader would care as little for the details of their arrangements as Menie, who was devoured with zeal

for the judicious hanging of the pictures, did for the incorrigible obstinacy of every chimney on the north side of the house. Suffice it, then, to say, that rebuilding cottages for the labourers on the Midhampton estate, and adjusting the rents of the tenants on a fairer footing than that established by the agent of the reckless and debt-encumbered Sir Magnus Oliphant, formed no mean share of the anxieties of our betrothed lovers, though it would be saying too much for their grave solidity, to maintain that schemes of a lighter nature, respecting the garden, the pictures, and the decorations, were never mentioned in their preparations for the future.

Florence had now recovered her former health and spirits, and was to be seen cantering over the moor with her black greyhound by her side, or flitting amongst the cottages of her humble friends, as merrily as ever, and if any change was noticeable in her, it was only that she appeared, if possible, still more anxious to do good, and more tender-hearted to poverty or distress, than even at the time when we were first introduced to her. Her marriage had been postponed to the following year, at her own earnest request, as she felt unwilling that her treacherous rival's death should appear to be followed by her own acceptance of the title of Philip's wife, with a haste which might seem indecorous, considering the claims put forward by the deceased to that appellation. But all suspense, and all doubt of her lover's fidelity, being removed, she could look hopefully forward to the future, and her sunny smiles were as truthful as happy tokens of her inward cheerfulness. Mrs. Burton and Menie also were enjoying a prosperity long denied them; and, thanks to Phil's interference with Mr. Sawdry in their behalf, were in possession of an income abundantly sufficient for all their wants, especially as Charles's

career promised, in the opinion of many competent authorities, to be one not only of satisfactory, but even brilliant success in his profession.

Leila, of all the ——shire coterie, was ill at ease, and fidgetty about the prolonged absence and epistolatory silence of Marcellus Aurantius, who had left the Priory nearly three months, and had not written in person once during that time, though two little high-flown notes in German, endited in a strange hand, had reached the anxious maiden herself, besides having the comfort of hearing from Phil, that he had received intelligence of him now and then from different sources. Yet her inquiries into whether even Darcy had received any letter from himself, only ended in disappointing negatives, and her questions concerning health and comfort were evaded by the very equivocal declaration, that “men never wrote to one another about pains in their little fingers.” That he had neither fallen, nor even been wounded in the duel before alluded to, she learnt from one of his own dictated notes, which informed her that he had become as soft-hearted as a parlour cat during his short stay in England, for that he had grossly neglected his duty in his ordeal by combat, and had missed an opportunity, which might never return, of ridding the world of a cruel, cowardly tyrant, for which act of folly Miss Leila alone was answerable.

“However,” concluded the epistle, grimly, “my cousin, Adalbert, seems disposed to take the matter up also, having got wind of it somehow ; if so, there will be masses to be said for a departed soul in the Castle of —— before many days be passed.”

So far, all was well enough, but she still was puzzled to imagine the reason of his employing an amanuensis, and felt quite convinced that some misfortune or accident had befallen him. But as we shall hear of him

again in a very few minutes, we will press our investigations no farther for the present, but return to Karl Dolchein, who lay in the county gaol, awaiting his trial on the following day. He had been making the best use of his time in preparing his defence, which simply consisted in rehearsing mad scenes and actions for the benefit of the turnkeys, the chaplain, and the visitors who were occasionally admitted into his cell, to see a prisoner whose crime had filled the whole neighbourhood with dismay; and being really a very clever fellow, after his own rascally fashion, he had daily strengthened the belief in his insanity, by the artful manner in which he adapted the nature of his paroxysms to the persons who were present. Before the chaplain he personated a raving fanatic of the Anabaptists of Munster, and pretended to fancy that he was living at the time of that extraordinary delusion, and so well did he interweave the sentiments and even the language of his imaginary sect with the overwhelming grief of his wife's infidelity, and so naturally did he confuse the murder of Pauline with some terrible sacrifice to a sense of duty in slaying one who had deserted the society of the saints to follow the man of the world, that his reverend visitor, an able scholar, as well as humane and hard-working pastor, was absolutely misled and deceived by his own erudition, and was even more taken in by this phase of lunacy than a less well-read person would have been. Being perfectly acquainted with German, he was able to follow the ravings of the prisoner pretty accurately, and the more he saw of him the more profound became his conviction of his insanity, an opinion which, as the cunning Dolchein well knew, would have immense weight at the trial, and he consequently spared no pains to complete his victory. He now resorted, in the presence of the chaplain, to an expedient which he had at first used only before the turnkeys, viz., the

uttering impassioned addresses and mock warnings in a mysterious and unknown tongue, which, however, as the reader will presently see, was very nearly ending very fatally for him. Before the medical examiners he was simply sullen, wisely thinking it best to give them as little opportunity of forming a fair judgment on his case as possible; and on the whole he had baffled inquiry so well, that the almost universal opinion was in favour of an acquittal.

About eight o'clock in the evening, he was aroused from a gloomy reverie by the entrance of a turnkey, with a man clad as a begging friar, who had obtained permission to visit him, and exert himself in endeavouring to bring him to some kind of sense of his present perilous position.

"Peace be to you, my son!" said he in German, and laid his hand on the head of the prisoner, an action which excited no suspicion in the mind of the gaoler, though a closer scrutiny might have observed a peculiar movement of his fingers, which savoured more of freemasonry than the confessional. Dolchein appeared paralyzed with terror, and shrunk from his touch, uttering a kind of gibbering noise, similar to that of an ape when terrified or angry. The good friar turned round with a bland smile to the turnkey—"The evil spirit within him begins to acknowledge my power," said he, in tolerable English; "leave me alone with him awhile, and I will exorcise the demon, and make him a quiet and tractable, if not altogether sane man." The fellow stared, but having no orders to remain with the prisoner during the visits of his friends, withdrew as he was asked, simply advising the new comer to take care that he did not get the devil out of him in a way he did not expect, for that "Krummacher was a queer customer at times."

As the door closed on the unsuspecting Cerberus,

the friar threw back his cowl, and grinning from ear to ear, addressed his companion in the asinine language, or in plainer terms, commenced the explanation of his appearance in most windpipe splitting Magyar.

"You hardly expected to see me here, Karl," said he, in a solemn voice, befitting a ghostly father lecturing an obdurate sinner, "but I heard of your difficulties when I arrived in London last night, and have lost no time in coming to see you. I am told that you are shamming to be mad, and a capital plan it is, but rather difficult to execute, particularly when you get into court. So here I am to give you a few lessons, and if you cannot profit by the instructions of the best conjuror's buffoon in all Europe, it is your own fault. Now look at me: this is idiocy." As he spoke, his features assumed a most loathsome aspect of drivelling, brute-like imbecility; all the animal nature seemed quadrupled, and every vestige of human reason utterly gone; it was the face of an ape, without even the vivacity or instinct of the beast. "That's rather too much for you, I fear," grumbled he, as his companion made sundry rough attempts at imitating him; "we must try something else."

"I have been seized with a religious fervour lately, quoth Karl, coolly, "perhaps that might do better."

"Excellent!" cried the other, with a low, hissing laugh, "that will be the best thing, for you are partly up in it, and the proper gestures are more simple beside."

Had you seen the countenance of the speaker, dear reader, as he uttered these words, you would hardly have believed it to be the same person. The kindling eyes, the wild enthusiastic intelligence which now lighted up his face, the melancholy smile, all betokened a noble mind, unhinged by sorrow or disease, but brilliant still in its erratic wanderings, and calling

for sympathy, rather than contempt, on the part of the spectator. He remained a considerable time sustaining this character, as a model for his pupil, but the endeavours of Dolchein to copy his gestures, though decidedly better than his former, did not satisfy his tutor, who, grumbling with rather unnecessary severity at his stupidity, once more addressed himself to a new pantomime. He was now a raving maniac, a mere human wild beast ; his eyes started, his hair bristled, his teeth gnashed together, with a horrible foam round the lips, and his whole aspect was fearful to behold. But the most singular part of the performance, perhaps, was, that you fancied you could see him shriek, though not a sound escaped his lips, and while in imagination the most terrible yells rung through your ears, and curdled the very blood in your veins, the profoundest silence in reality reigned through the gloomy cell. Dolchein essayed to imitate him, and somewhat to the astonishment of both himself and his friend, succeeded decently well after a few trials ; at any rate, as the latter remarked, it was worth trying ; especially as the real shrieks might be added in the court, which would carry off any little imperfection in the gestures themselves.

"Certainly," said Karl, "nothing can be easier than for me to interrupt the proceedings with a yell one might hear half-way to Vienna, so that's soon settled."

"Yes," retorted the juggler, "and your business would be pretty quickly settled too, if you are fool enough to do any such thing. Do you imagine the doctors can't detect the difference between the cry of a madman and the howling of a fellow who remembers old Haynau's floggings, for cheating the soldiers at dice. No, no ! I am not going to trust to your yells, I assure you, but I have an excellent plan of my own. I will back myself as a ventriloquist against any man in

Europe, and I must contrive to get a place near the dock, so when I give the signal, you must make that grimace, and fall down on your face, leaving all the rest to me."

"Are you sure of being able to carry out the deceit?" asked Dolchein.

"Certain," answered the other; "I will give you a specimen. Sit down on your bed, and hide your face in your hands, for I am going to try to cast the devil out of you. Not that I mean to succeed, for it looks more natural to fail, and these gaolers are no fools."

Dolchein obeyed, and in less than five minutes the turnkey, summoned by the most diabolical yells which ever issued from a human throat, rushed into the cell, and angrily demanded of the friar what he meant by exciting the poor wretch in this monstrous manner.

"Leave me alone," said the holy man, "the demon within him is aroused, and makes great strugglings, ere it quit him, but an hour's labour will do it yet."

"An hour's labour!" roared Cerberus; "do you suppose the gaol is to be like a bedlam for an hour, to please you? Come away with you this minute!" and seizing him by the frock, he dragged him from the cell. In vain did the friar beg for leave to complete his work, and declare that the uproar was only a signal that his prayers were working a cure; the turnkey was inexorable, and lugged him forth by main force, chanting in a doleful tone the most lugubrious, penitential psalms for the benefit of his spiritual patient.

"These Papishers are wonderfully superstitious, Jem," growled the gaoler to a friend; "but if the poor devil wasn't mad before, that chap has made him mad enough now. My soul! how he did bellow."

Meanwhile the juggler paced soberly down the High Street, on the way to his inn, rejoicing extremely

in the approaching deliverance of his old companion in many a choice villany, when coming round a corner, he ran right up against no less a personage than Marcellus Aurantius. "In the devil's name, what brought him here!" growled he. But the demon invoked gave no reply.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE LYNX REAPPEARS IN A DOUBLE CAPACITY.

THE court was crowded to suffocation nearly two hours before the trial of Karl Dolchein was called on, and the utmost interest was expressed in this doubtful investigation, which plainly enough depended upon the credit the jury were inclined to give to the medical evidence of the prisoner's insanity. Eminent counsel were employed on both sides, a subscription being raised for the purpose of obtaining the best advice for the defence, to which worthy Mr. Dwight was a liberal contributor, being, in his simple-hearted piety, a profound believer in Dolchein's religious aberrations. So the formidable array of counsel for the prosecution was met by an equal force in arms for the defence, and Midhampton once more became the scene of great excitement, as the theatre of a contest no less obstinate than the famous election. The interest of this trial, moreover, was heightened to a most delicious extent to the connoisseurs in such matters, by the fact of a young and pretty girl being one of the principal witnesses, and those who rejoiced in the prospect of an execution, naturally considered it a great enhancement of the delights of that exhibition, to previously witness the merciless worrying of a handsome damsel by a practised Old Bailey lawyer. So when Leila appeared in court, she was greeted with a hum of curiosity similar to that which runs round the spectators at a bull-fight when the monarch of the pastures makes his first rushing entrance to the fatal arena. And bets were laid, that

the poor little maiden would retire in a flood of tears, even if she were not carried out in hysterics, before she had been under fire half an hour, which wagers, however, were eagerly taken up by the dwellers around Midhampton, whose trust in the pluck of their heroine was as firm as that of Bruce in the Lord of the Isles. Indeed, when Tom Lawson, the trainer, evinced his readiness to take ten to one, if any gentleman were disposed to give those odds, that "Missie don't floor the bigwig, instead of being put down by him herself," his valiant offer remained unchallenged. Nor did this appreciation of her courage appear overrated, for after two hours of the severest cross-examination which could be inflicted on the witness, by a man whose whole object was to make her break down if possible, and despite of numberless brow-beatings of so unwarrantable a nature as to call for the interference of the judge, and even to excite the indignant murmurs of the fellow-counsel of the inquisitor, while the court echoed at times with roars of disapprobation from the crowd, despite the exertions of the officers to preserve order, Leila remained unvanquished, and even refused the indulgence of a short respite, which was offered her, in consideration of her long-protracted ordeal.

"I am not at all tired, my lord," she replied to the judge, "and the time of the jury and the gentlemen of the bar is of far more value than mine. I would far rather have it all over at one trial of my patience, and it would be but a cruel mercy to send me away to come back again to fresh insults. But as there appears to be no limit to these irrelevant questions, asked only to put me out of temper, I must beg leave to decline answering any more questions, unless I am expressly directed to do so, either by yourself or Sir Francis Feversham."

At this conjuncture, Sergeant Wiggins, the leader

for the defence, expressed his willingness to dismiss the witness, after asking one more question.

"Can you explain to the jury," said he, "why you evince so strong an opinion of the prisoner's sanity, despite the many circumstances which you yourself acknowledge to be true, which militate against your judgment?"

"Certainly," answered Leila; "when I implored the men who apprehended him to use no unnecessary violence to a poor madman, he shot at me a glance of malignant intelligence, which as completely evinced his sense of having outwitted me then, as your unmanly impertinence to-day shows your knowledge that you have not gained any advantage over me on the present occasion, and also because Mr. Dwight, who visited him in prison, and heard him preaching in an unknown tongue, repeated two or three words to me which have quite convinced me that his mystic language is only Magyar."

"How did you learn to distinguish that language?" asked Wiggins.

"From the Count of ———," answered Leila, briefly.

"Was he not a kind of lover of yours?" continued he.

"I hardly know," answered she, demurely; "with children of my age it is difficult to tell playfellows from admirers, but we were excellent friends. '*Solvitur risu tabulæ*.'" The whole court was in a roar, and Leila, dismissed from her examination, retired amidst a renewed shout of gratulation from her humble friends.

The remaining evidence for the prosecution was of the usual formal but uninteresting kind, of which every trial for murder must necessarily have its share, consisting of witnesses to the fact of a body being discovered, which no one soul living disputed, and that the skull and face were fearfully mutilated, which was

equally beyond doubt; and nothing exciting any curiosity transpired, until Sergeant Wiggins rose to open the defence, and to make as good a use as possible of the only chance on which his client had to depend, viz., his insanity—on which, however, he confidently expected to see his client triumphantly acquitted.

Warned by the previous disapprobation of his merciless onslaught upon Leila to avoid all personalities for the future, and never having had any other object in pretending to attribute evil motives to herself and friends, than merely to practise upon her nervousness, and break down the chain of her evidence, he abstained from all allusion to the previous life of the prisoner, except the bad terms upon which he had lived with the deceased, and came pretty fairly to the matter at issue, viz., the assertion that at the time of committing the murder, or at the very least immediately afterwards, Dolchein had been the victim of a mania entirely unfitting him for self-government of any kind, and rendering him as irresponsible for the moral guilt of his actions as an infuriated beast of prey.

He called as his first witness the chaplain of the prison, whose evidence decidedly went very much in favour of his client, as the character of the reverend gentleman was alike above suspicion of collusion, and contemptuous disregard of the value of his opinion, being a man of well-known sense and learning. Indeed he involuntarily gave a cue for the effective performance of the well-laid scheme of the previous night, for he allowed himself, in his kindly zeal, to be so carried away by his subject in describing some of the conversations he had held with the monomaniac, as to repeat with all the solemnity of manner and gesture with which the original adjurations had been accompanied, his earnest prayers for the removal of that terrible hallucination; a proceeding, which struck the juggler

as affording so excellent an opportunity for practising his deception, that he gave the preconcerted signal to his confederate, and the voice of the witness was suddenly drowned in shrieks so appalling, that the terrified spectators fled in all directions, and the cries of women, carried out in violent hysterics, added to the confusion and dismay.

As soon as order was restored, and the prisoner recovered from his sham fit, Sergeant Wiggins announced to the reverend witness that he would detain him no longer, indeed that it seemed hardly worth while to continue the defence, for the case was so clear, that he might safely leave the acquittal of his client to what the jury had already witnessed in person. As he thus spoke, he cast a searching look upon the arbiters of the prisoner's doom, but appeared hardly satisfied with his scrutiny, for he once more relapsed into mere common-place, as if undecided how to act.

"If my learned brother has really concluded his examination," said Sir Francis, "I must trouble the witness with a few questions before he leaves the box. If the trial is to proceed, I shall defer them to a later stage in the proceedings."

The foreman of the jury here addressed the Court, stating that it was the unanimous wish of himself and his colleagues that the defence should be continued, as they could not consider the prisoner's insanity as proved at present.

Upon this hint, a new witness was called, in the shape of the turnkey who was usually in attendance on the prisoner, and who had watched the effect of the visit of his ghostly adviser on the previous night; and the examination was now committed to the junior counsel, all three seniors, for some reason or other, shunning the task. The man went trippingly through his evidence, which, like the preceding, was very much

in favour of the prisoner, until becoming more voluble than was desired by the party who called him, he made mention of the mysterious tongue in which Dolchein was wont to hold forth, and which, in his opinion, was by far the maddest of all his performances. As he was about to leave the box, he was detained by Sir Francis Feversham—"Have you a good memory, turnkey?" asked he.

"Excellent," replied the man; "I never forget a face, or a thing I ever heard."

"Could you remember a voice, do you think?"

"Oh, yes, sir, or a footstep either."

"Do you think you could recognize the sound of words you don't understand?"

"I dare say I could; at least, one or two, here and there."

"Very well; have you ever heard anything like this before?" And he pronounced, very slowly and distinctly, a sentence in some language utterly unknown to all the crowd within those walls, except the prisoner himself and his confederate; but the effect upon them was terribly similar to plucking the last plank from a drowning mariner.

"I remember enough to be quite sure I have heard those words before," said the turnkey, stoutly. "I can swear to their having been used by the prisoner."

"You are quite sure," reiterated Sir Francis; and the man replied that he was. Sergeant Wiggins was now once more upon his legs, but it was noticeable that his anxiety appeared rather to parade his witnesses, and get them safe off the field, than to elicit from them any more information, than mere statistical precedents of similar aberrations; so he concluded his task much more tamely than he had begun, and the balance of opinion as to the issue of the trial began to turn

against the prisoner. Sir Francis now rose to reply to evidence, and his opening sentence disclosed a strange addition to the information to be afforded, which had recently come to his knowledge. "Since I had the honour of addressing you at the commencement of the trial," said he, turning to the jury, "I have received a note from a distinguished foreigner, requesting me to call him as a witness, and assuring me that he can throw some light upon the mysterious ravings of the prisoner at the bar, and in accordance with his wish I shall bring him before you. Call Marcellus Aurantius, Count of ——."

As the words left his lips, a shriek of very genuine terror rang from the unhappy prisoner, and it was no feigned paroxysm which now blanched his cheek, and caused his knees to knock together with irrepressible terror.

The young nobleman appeared immediately upon the summons, and all eyes were turned on the new-comer, who promised to throw such a new light on the posture of affairs. Being examined as to the meaning of the sentence which the turnkey remembered so distinctly, he pronounced it to be part of a revolutionary address, circulated a short time since throughout the whole of Hungary, and affirmed that it not only contained no religious dogma, which even a madman might have brooded over until it formed the burthen of his fanciful exhortations, but was a mere scurrilous application of an old legend to the existing state of things in the Empire. He went on to say, that he had known the prisoner for some time, that he was a most dangerous and designing man, and that nothing was more likely from what he had already seen of him, than his feigning madness to escape the penalty of his crime. He had been convicted once before, to the Count's certain knowledge, of shamming dumbness—

in fact he himself had nearly hanged him for that deception, and consequently that great pains should be taken to prevent a similar imposture on the present occasion. Marcellus was subjected to a long and wearisome cross-examination, in expectation of throwing him off his guard, and shaking the value of his evidence, by establishing some kind of proof that he was impelled by malice towards the prisoner in the course he was now adopting; but he was no common man, and had learned from boyhood the utmost control of temper, both as to countenance and language; and no one better knew how to adopt an air of contemptuous good-humour, when any exhibition of anger would have injured his plans. So he mildly pronounced the outrageous insolence of the sergeant "a very droll set of questions, put by a very inquisitive old gentleman," and gravely offered to leave off answering, if the judge was at all bored by this idle gossiping—a novel view of cross-examination, which his character as a foreigner allowed him to take without offence. But he left the box, having terribly shaken the belief of all who heard him in the prisoner's insanity, and having strongly impressed on the minds of the jury one great fact, viz., that in cunning and trickery, no less than in violence, Karl Dolchein was a dangerous fellow.

The judge summed up, not altogether unfavourably for the prisoner, as he laid the most humane stress upon the necessity of being quite convinced of the culprit's sanity, before they consigned him to a felon's death; but it was not difficult to see how his own judgment went, and little doubt was felt that the verdict would go against the wretched murderer.

"The Count of — has hanged Dolchein for a certainty," quoth one of the junior counsel to a friend, when the jury had retired to consult. Sergeant Wiggins turned quickly round.

"Not so fast, young sir," said he, angrily, "there was one juror who looked decidedly in favour of acquittal. One man can stem the whole tide here, and has done so before now."

"Certainly, sergeant; 'one fool makes many,' they say," replied the young man, with an impertinent laugh, for he detested Wiggins, and was getting rather past being snubbed; "but five fat fellows like those who most unmistakably looked halts at the prisoner, are sharp odds for a sickly little fellow like your sheet-anchor, the baker."

The learned leader turned savagely away, while his irreverent assailant continued his conversation with his next neighbour, offering to lay his head, which was the only fortune he had, that the jury would bring in a verdict of guilty in less than an hour. It was a lucky thing for him, however, that no one took his bet, or that wagers of heads are not recoverable by civil law, for hour after hour passed, without a verdict being pronounced; the jury were shut up with the usual formalities, directions being left by the judge to acquaint him of the fact of their having arrived at an unanimous decision, should such be the case, at any reasonable hour that evening; but no sign of this agreement was given, and the inhabitants of the city were compelled to go to their beds with the grand question yet unsolved, leaving the jury to their weary vigil during the long hours of the night. At the sitting of the Court next morning the foreman announced that there was no prospect of coming to a verdict, since one of their body resolutely refused to condemn a fellow-creature to death, while the remotest possibility remained of the plea put forward by his counsel being true. The jury were therefore discharged, and the prisoner once more remanded to his cell.

Meanwhile Marcellus had been subjected by his

pretty playfellow to a cross-examination, little less rigid than that of Sergeant Wiggins, with respect to his long silence, his mysterious evasion of all mention of his health, and his sudden and ghost-like return—"casting up," as Leila very justly remarked, "like the knave at Beggar-my-neighbour, just when nobody expected him, and when his arrival put everything connected with the trial topsy-turvy."

To this Marcellus meekly replied, that "he could not write, since a fellow-officer had run his right sleeve through with a rapier, his arm unluckily being in it at the time; to say nothing of a pistol-bullet in his shoulder, which was a *gage d'amitié* from another friend, upon whom he had been experimentalizing with his left hand—its nobler brother being crippled, as before mentioned; and that over and above these little inconveniences, he had been laid up with a kind of marsh fever, which prevented his being a good correspondent."

"At any rate, you might have let us know when the bullet was extracted," said Leila, "and sent us some general account of your health. I thought we were never going to see you, or hear of you any more, which would have been very vexatious indeed, for I have been expecting my coins ever since you left us."

"I wish I could have sent you an account of the extraction of the bullet," replied Marcellus, laughing, "for I have not got rid of it yet, owing to its having twice made a journey during the night immediately preceding its intended removal; but when I can lay hold of it, I will present it to you with as sincere gratification as I ever felt in making any offering in my whole life. As to your coins, you were quite safe of receiving them, for I gave express directions to Adalbert to forward them to you, with a little note, in

case I never came back from a select party to which I was invited, near Milan. But joking apart, I did not wish to worry my friends by doleful bulletins of health, and made up my mind to die quietly, if my medical attendant happened to be right, and to come back and play at battledore with you, if I had the best of the argument. So here I am. My mysterious reappearance is easily explained. I received intelligence of Pauline's murder from a man, to whom you like an extravagant puss gave half-a-crown, when he asked you for a penny, merely because he was a Hungarian; and from the same source I learned that Dolchein feigned madness, and that his trial would probably take place this week. I fancied that the knowledge of my being in the country might put him too much upon his guard, and that certain parts of the evidence might be suppressed, which I particularly wished to be brought forward. Lastly, I had a babyish desire to see how my sudden return would be received by my friends, and was richly rewarded, by frightening a lady out of her wits, who laughed at me three months ago for my superstition. Now, don't say that you did not take me for a ghost; for I declare, upon my honour, that you were every whit as much deceived as the Prince."

"I certainly did think it was something strange, and not your living self," answered Leila, simply; "but I was not terrified. I was much shocked at what I considered a confirmation of my worst fears that you were dead; but I was so far glad to see you, that it was better than having no opportunity of bidding you farewell."

Marcellus was deeply affected by the poor little maiden's artless confession of interest in him, but he was a gentleman in every idea, and incapable of feeding his own vanity at the expense of his companion, so he

hastened to change the subject, and inquired after Aunt Dossy with so unembarrassed a manner, that Leila was insensibly brought back to her usual spirits, and the supper being concluded, during which this conference had taken place, and the conversation becoming general, the evening passed over without any further approach to so dangerously romantic a topic, as the unexpected meeting in which Leila had mistaken Marcellus for a ghost, until convinced by his hearty shake of both her hands, of his material existence, as mortal flesh and blood.

But when the party broke up, and a general distribution of bed-candlesticks was being made by the butler, the young Count desired a short interview with the Colonel, and throwing himself in an arm-chair, delivered himself as follows: "I made a great fool of myself this evening, my dear sir; and nearly scared poor Leila out of her wits, but in so doing, I have made a discovery, which has induced me to refer the matter to you. That there is something too absurd in a girl of less than sixteen being openly engaged, for it to be at all advisable, I readily allow; but I nevertheless beg to say, that unless you are willing to sanction my addresses being paid to your daughter, when she is old enough to judge for herself, I must put an abrupt end to my visit, and absent myself for such time as may serve to efface the memory of last spring."

The good Colonel was amazed beyond measure at this address, but remarking in a kindly tone that his daughter's extreme youth necessitated a less cordial answer than he would fain have given, requested a fuller explanation of the circumstances, which had led to a step, which the suitor himself confessed to be hardly in accordance with his own ideas of prudence.

"I am half ashamed," said Marcellus, "to confess

the childish folly, on my own part, which produced the discovery to which I alluded, but I will tell you straightforwardly the whole affair. I returned to England very unexpectedly, and being desirous of confronting Dolchein's witnesses without my arrival being known, concealed my return even from your family, so that I arrived here before the least suspicion of my being even in England had reached Leila, who had left the assize town, as I happened to know, immediately upon the close of her examination. As I drove up to your house I recognized her form in the avenue, and a jesting idea struck me that I would give her a surprise—knowing from experience the firmness of her nerves, and expecting it all to end in a good laugh. So I hid myself behind a tree, and when she was within a convenient distance, glided out, and met her face to face. She evinced no terror, but to my amazement she did unquestionably take me for a spirit, and as such addressed me. I need not repeat her words, which will go down to my grave with me untold; but they were such as to convince me that I had found in her the partner for whom my heart had ever yearned. I should like a wife, if I ever marry, who will be a soldier's companion and stay in peril—one who would defend my castle, if I were from home, with her own example and voice, and who could, if stern necessity arose, even put with her own hand the torch to the train which sent assailants and assailed in one fierce roar to the sky. Above all, I would fain have one, whose ambition was akin to my own, and who could dare all for a noble end. I shall see troublous times, methinks, ere I die, and I feel myself that most cheerless of objects 'a man with a destiny.' I recognize in Leila a kindred spirit; I feel that I could kindle in her young heart that perfect sympathy of pursuits and interests, which is indispen-

sable to the comfort of such a man as myself—and for effecting this object her youth will be an advantage, rather than a drawback. I do not propose making any direct offer to her at present, nor do I desire to put the matter, as regards your own sanction, upon any footing, which will bind you to support my cause. I simply wish to be permitted to win her affections, if I can, without misusing your hospitality in so doing. Whether I am very wise in thus involving myself in so onesided a compact as to acknowledge my obligation to be faithful to a lady, who has no corresponding pledge to be true to me, is my own concern; but this is what I wish to lay before you, and what, if I obtain your consent, I intend rigidly to carry out. In fact, I offer to be myself definitely bound in honour to adhere to my proposal from this very hour, while Leila is to be permitted to love me, or reject me as she chooses, when she is old enough to judge for herself. Does this suit you?"

"Really, Marcellus," replied the Colonel, smiling, "this is the very oddest way of proposing for a girl that I ever heard of; yet at the same time it would be such arrant hypocrisy in me to pretend to be distressed at the prospect of my daughter marrying a man of distinguished rank, and corresponding character as a soldier and a man of honour, that I can offer no greater objection to your project, than merely to give you fair warning, that if the day should ever come when I am compelled, as a father, to put a very strict interpretation on your own proposition, I am not to be considered answerable for the inconvenience to you. Leila must not be encouraged in wild fancies, which will unfit her for a quiet English home, and then be deserted, as a mere child-favourite, as a matter of course; and, at the same time, if, when she grows older, the prospect of an adventurous life loses its

charm, and she is unwilling to follow your fortunes, I must be exonerated from all responsibility in keeping her to her engagement."

"On my head be it!" exclaimed the Count, earnestly. "I will be as true to her in life, and unto the death, as I hope to be ever found to my God and to my emperor. And as for my wanting to force her into keeping her engagement, I would not marry any woman on the face of the earth, Colonel Mainwaring, who would flinch from being boiled down for the soldiers' dinners, if my honour or power depended upon her self-sacrifice! Good night."

So saying, he strode off to his bedroom, humming the "Bronze Horse" with such indiscreet vigour, that he woke Philip Darcy, who had gone to bed early with a headache, and was wrathfully picked off with a pair of boots in consequence.

CHAPTER XXIV.

CRIME LEVELS MAN WITH BEAST IN VERY LITERAL EARNEST.

TWO or three days after the events recorded in the last chapter, a large party of the principal characters of our story were leisurely strolling up and down the North Pier of the good port of Sunderland, watching a fleet of colliers coming merrily out of harbour, having been wind-bound for so long a time that the number of ships ready to sail at the first convenient opportunity had risen to an almost unprecedented height. Strange to say, though Florence and her lover were both there, they were not in company together; but while Phil was describing to Menie the colours of the foreign vessels, which were being rapidly towed over the bar by the busy steam-tugs, his lady love was pacing thoughtfully by the side of a young man of decidedly foreign appearance, whose dress and language alike betrayed the land of his birth. He was speaking in German, but his accent was even more unmistakeably southern than that of Marcellus, and his almost oriental luxuriance of metaphorical compliment, and frequent Latinisms, betokened his habitual association with races to whom the tongue he now used was not the familiar vehicle of the thoughts, while his flashing eyes and restless step were equally at variance with the impassive nature of the genuine Teuton.

"I have longed for months to see you, Miss Montgomery," said he, "and to tell you that had Hermann Rodelein a thousand lives, they should all be at your

service. You were willing, at the call of humanity, to sacrifice what was dearer to you than mere existence—by the agony and desolation of your own heart you were content to save from the ravages of arbitrary power the hearths of hundreds, who were not even of your own nation—like some good angel you stood between the demon of destruction and my beloved country, and it would hardly be idolatry to worship such an one as you as the patron saint of our land. But while we have public shrines or private homes, so long shall the prayers of many a grateful spirit float up to heaven for you and yours; and our children's children shall tell, with tears of enthusiasm, of the noble British maiden who could bear to see the sun robbed of his glorious rays, the birds of their melody, and earth of its verdure and its flowers, as far as her own enjoyment of God's fair world was involved, rather than purchase her own happiness by the misery of an oppressed race."

"You pay me far higher compliments than I deserve," answered Florence, modestly. "I only did my duty, and one which thousands of other women would have discharged quite as well. Mr. Darcy owed you his life; nay, more, he was the unhappy cause of embroiling your family with the government. Could I do less than exhort him to suffer somewhat for you in return? and as for my own share in the sacrifice, you little know the nature of an English lady, if you imagine that she will spare her own heart one pang which is necessary for the honour of him she loves. No, Herr Rodelein! if Philip Darcy's life, and that alone, could have saved yours, I would have unhesitatingly exhorted him to give it; and to have witnessed with my own eyes the fatal blow which bereft him of life, would have been to me a positive pleasure, compared with the withering shame

of seeing him flinch from his duty as a gentleman. But a truce to these melancholy topics, which ill befit the cloudless sky and the glorious view before us, and, as I would fain hope, is equally inappropriate to the auspicious circumstances under which we meet. Permit me to congratulate you upon your safe arrival in a land which offers security to all who seek it, even though their political opinions may ill accord with those of its inhabitants, and where extreme differences of opinion are not destructive of private esteem. I was glad to hear from the Count of —, that the members of your family have received a pardon of all past disloyalty, upon his pledge for their good conduct for the future, and that you yourself have been enabled to transmit sufficient property to this country to render your residence amongst us quite free from the painful anxieties which but too often press with cruel severity upon those who are little fitted by birth and education for the terrible struggle against poverty in a foreign land. Not that you could ever have lacked friends, whose houses would have been open to you at all times; yet I can cheerfully sympathise with the manly satisfaction you evinced a few minutes ago, that you are in a position to render aid to your countrymen, instead of needing it yourself, and that your life will be one of comfort and ease, if not altogether equal to the home of your childhood."

"In good faith, lady!" returned Rodelein, cheerfully, "if a man who has witnessed such scenes as I have, can keep a comfortable home over his head, and the wolf of poverty from his door, without any degrading occupation, or being beholden to any man for charity, he has little to complain of. And since some part of my early education, which I acquired from mere love of science, is likely to stand me in good service now, I am too grateful to heaven for hav-

ing given me, as a boy, a fancy for everything connected with mining, to be at all averse to putting my knowledge to a practical use. And as I honestly think that my assistance to my good friend Darcy in the administration of his estates at Monkworth will not be without its value, I can look forward to spending the rest of my days in England with much cheerfulness."

Florence felt a little astonishment at the heroic friendship of the two young men ending so unromantically, as the appointment of Damon as a kind of land agent to Pythias, and perhaps her face expressed her dissatisfaction, for Rodelem recommenced his conversation by a direct allusion to the subject of her thoughts.

"Philip, of course, was all anxiety to provide me with a house, and estate, and all the worldly goods of a wealthy English gentleman, and nothing, I believe, would have given him greater pleasure than to have turned me into a kind of statue of hospitality, upon the altar of which he might heap all his possessions with his usual reckless generosity. But that would not do for me at all, for although I would cheerfully have accepted from him what was necessary to enable me to earn my own living, had I absolutely needed it, in return for my good-will towards him when I had the power to serve him, yet there my inclination to live at another man's cost ends, and it is entirely by my own choice that I embrace the occupation to which I shall henceforth devote myself. Nothing could have fallen out better; he is just now in want of a certain person, I of a certain employment; he avails himself of an opportunity to serve me, I, in return, shall give him the benefit of all my best exertions and unflinching zeal, to improve his mining property. And depend upon it, Miss Montgomery, that this is a

much more rational, if less high-sounding mode of helping a friend, than doling him out money, and making him a pensioner in reality, however kindly you may veil the fact to himself and others."

Florence assented, though her mind was hardly enough of the busy, practical world, to fully appreciate his remark, and it was not until the end of her stroll when Marcellus informed her that the sale of property by which Rodelein had been enabled to transmit his money to England, had only been a pious fraud on Darcy's part, who had, through the agency of himself, purchased the estate, which was instantly confiscated upon discovery of the owner's flight, that she was at all reconciled to so unsentimental a transaction, though upon being informed of this new feature in the affair, she was compelled to own that her lover had exercised as much liberality as delicacy, in the course he had adopted towards his old protector.

But we must now turn to another party of the loungers, consisting of the Colonel, Marcellus, Leila, and Julia, who were collected round the sergeant-major of the regiment then in garrison, who was relating, with somewhat wearisome minuteness, the account he had been reading in that morning's paper of an event in which all present took the natural interest of persons well acquainted with the principal actor in the adventure, and two of whom had exercised no little influence on his fortunes, and that event was the escape from prison of Karl Krummacher, alias Dolchein.

"The most extraordinary part of the whole affair, Colonel," said the narrator, "is that the evidence of a man who deposes to having seen some one very like the prisoner enter a house in one of the low streets of the town, is contradicted point-blank by the turn-keys, two of whom assert that they both saw and

spoke to him in his cell, more than an hour after the witness pretends to have met him in the street; besides which, the number of doors he must have opened, and the passages he must have traversed, to say nothing of the distance over which he must have gone to reach the outer wall, all prove that the attempt must have taken the greater part of the night. Moreover, he is said to have been a singularly awkward man, and the last person in the world to have effected an escape, which seems to have required the agility of a monkey; added to which, he had badly cut his left hand the day before the trial, which would have been, one would have thought, an insuperable obstacle to his plan. However, he is gone, and all the efforts of the police to track him have been fruitless, up to eleven this morning, when a telegraphic message was forwarded to the newspaper office to that effect."

"As for escaping in the way you mention, sergeant," said Marcellus, "Karl Dolchein would have been quite safe in a sheep-fold, if you had put a few brambles at the top, for there never was a clumsier fellow or greater coward! Did no one come to see him during the day, for he must have been helped out somehow, that is clear enough?"

"No one had been near him," replied the sergeant, "except his confessor, who seems to have been an excellent man for a Papist, and to have done his duty most conscientiously."

Marcellus appeared dissatisfied, and attempted to throw the blame on the friar, whose part was vigorously taken by the good sergeant, when a diversion was made by the appearance of a man with a barrel-organ, leading an enormous ape by a chain, and making the best of his way towards a boat belonging to a Dutch lugger in the offing, which appeared to be waiting for him, as the men who were sitting in it,

immediately upon seeing him trudging over the shingle towards them, began to make preparation for shoving off. Marcellus caught one glance of the face of the organ-grinder, and leaving the party to whom he was talking, ran swiftly towards the group on the sand, which he reached just as the sailors, with shouts of laughter, were helping the ape over the gunwale of the boat, having already taken the man on board.

He laid his hand roughly on the shoulder of the animal, which lost its balance, and fell backwards into the shallow water, amid renewed roars of laughter from the Dutchmen. But the face of the organ-grinder showed no signs of merriment or anger at this practical joke, as it appeared to the others—fear, unmixed terror, was its only expression. Marcellus, however, merely laughed, and begging leave to look at the beast more closely, as he had never seen one before, flung a sovereign to its master, and taking the chain in his hand, led away the object of his curiosity, the ape following him with a chattering noise, but evincing no inclination to escape.

If it had not been too absurd a supposition, one might almost have fancied that the Count was holding an animated debate with a monkey, and bringing back the days of *Æsop*, when animals and men lived on speaking terms with one another; but as it is, I presume he was only making it play tricks, a supposition rendered more probable by the awkward gambols which the brute performed from time to time. In about ten minutes Marcellus reappeared, and hailing the organ-grinder in a tongue which the sailors did not understand, demanded a certain pocket-book, at least, so it would appear, as the man took all the trouble of unpacking a small trunk to get at it, and presented it to the Count with an air of deep respect. Still holding the chain tightly wound round his arm,

the Hungarian took a careful survey of the papers contained in the case which he had received, and having satisfied himself of the presence of what he wanted, he let go the chain, and saluting the ape with a vigorous kick as it was scrambling over the gunwale, sent it head first into the bottom of the boat, where it lay howling in a most dismal manner, as the sailors pulled lustily towards their ship.

"How cruel you are," said Leila, indignantly, as she now came up, accompanied by the rest of the party.

"Nonsense," replied Marcellus, laughing, "it is better to be kicked than hanged. So farewell to Karl Dolchein." He then proceeded to inform her that he had recognised the organ-grinder in a moment, and having had cause to suspect his identity with the mock friar, he was led to watch him very narrowly on the present occasion, and had little difficulty, when his attention was once directed to it, in detecting the clever disguise in which Dolchein was effecting his escape. "However," said he, in conclusion, "it was not my business to hang him, so I contented myself with extorting from him a mass of papers, with which he might still have attempted to traffic in the blood of his countrymen. I have had enough of amateur policemen'ship for the present."

"Did you learn how he managed to escape from the gaol?" asked Leila.

"Just as I expected," returned Marcellus; "he left his cell in the dress of the friar, leaving his juggling accomplice in his place, and that worthy was soon out of captivity, for he was too used to gaol-breaking to be kept in very long by such an antediluvian affair as the castle at ——. So much for our friend Karl!"

CHAPTER XXV.

THE VIOLET APPEALS TO ITS LOYAL ADHERENTS WITH GREAT SUCCESS.

OUR story now takes a bound of a whole year, and transports us once more to the borough of Mid-hampton, and the nomination of members to serve in the newly-summoned Parliament. Lord Knowsley is at length in office, and Philip Darcy again stands upon the hustings to solicit a continuance of the confidence of his former constituency. But all the bustle and tumult of the previous election has now vanished, and had the occasion been the delivery of a temperance lecture, the proceedings could hardly have been tamer or more devoid of excitement. There is no Augustus Tomnoddy, no Mr. McKenzie, in fact, no Yellow candidate, and the speeches of the proposers and seconders are more redolent of hearty good-will to their neighbours of all classes and degrees, than the rivalry of warring parties in the State. First of all, then, we have Mr. Montgomery in his old capacity of Darcy's proposer, and as his closing words will throw some light upon the existing state of affairs amongst our characters, I will venture to transcribe them.

"We had our little jokes amongst ourselves," said he, "when I last stood here, concerning my motives for supporting my friend Darcy, and I am afraid that you will consider it an even worse case than ever now, when it is tolerably well known to all of you, I believe, that in the course of this week I shall welcome him into my family as my son-in-law. As he has been on

his probation with me and won my sincere esteem, so I trust that it will be with your appreciation of him also, and that his manly good sense, and steady attention to your interests on all occasions on which local business may have demanded his services, may not have been entirely lost even upon those, who originally were unfavourable to his views, so I hope that you will support by your votes the high opinion which I can conscientiously express of his merits, and return him to Parliament as a member well calculated to do credit to the prudence of your choice. As you have found him hitherto, so I believe he will continue for the future, and to that fair judgment of him I can leave his cause with perfect confidence."

And next stands forward to second the nomination no less a personage than Yellow Jack of former days, but now a most enthusiastic admirer of Philip Darcy. He had requested as a very great favour to be permitted to fill the office he now held, and though many a more dignified person might have been selected, few men of more irreproachable moral character, or higher reputation for honesty and respectability than John Mosely could have been found in the whole world.

"I have not turned my coat, fellow-townsmen," said he, with modest self-respect, "as perhaps you have been informed; but, to tell the plain truth, though I have not deserted my old principles, my former party have quite deserted me. I loved liberty, independence, and fair play; and I love them now, but I have seen them practically more honoured by my late antagonists than by my political friends, and I am not disposed to run after mere names, like a turkey-cock after a red rag, any more. I have had a tolerably convincing proof that tyranny and oppression can live very snugly side by side with exaggerated zeal for perfect liberty of opinion, and I don't like the

mixture at all. And even although I had to submit to a little more control than exactly suits my taste, if the party of Lord Knowsley were to obtain a decisive and permanent superiority, yet I would rather stand in some fear of the paw of the lion, than have my pockets picked, and my face spit in by an ape. So having found a candidate who is, at any rate, honest and manly-hearted, who neither bullies those who are not so rich as himself, nor allows others to bully or dictate to him, who can walk upright, and look his fellow-creatures in the face, as God meant us to do, and who in Parliament, as well as out of it, will, whether he loses by it or not, tell the truth and shame the devil, I mean to stick by him, and hope to be allowed on many another occasion, the honour I am now enjoying, of heartily seconding the nomination of Mr. Darcy of Midhampton Hall."

Loud cheers followed the speech of the honest-hearted grocer, mingled of course with some disapprobation from the few Yellows in the crowd, but upon the present occasion the Blues mustered so strongly, that the hisses were almost drowned in the vigorous applause.

Third in the order of the speakers, came Colonel Mainwaring, who advancing to the front of the hustings with his frank, good-humoured face a little overcast with the nervousness of making his first appearance in his present capacity, proposed as the colleague of Mr. Darcy, his excellent young friend Charles Burton of the Middle Temple, who untried and inexperienced as he was as yet, had shown such brilliant talents and such undaunted perseverance in his previous studies, that it was only doing him bare justice to presume that he would fill his future position as their member in a highly creditable manner.

"But, to tell you the truth," continued the Colonel,

merrily, recovering his presence of mind as he warmed into his subject, "my nomination of Mr. Burton is another very corrupt job of family connexion, every whit as bad as my good friend Montgomery's, and I have been the principal offender throughout. I fancied that my dear ward, Philip Darcy, whom I have always regarded as a son ever since he was deprived of a father's care, was in want of a good, high-principled wife to keep him straight, for he was a rattling young dog, always after some ridiculous adventure or other, and I took it into my wise head, that being happily married would give him a tie to home, and make a useful man of him, instead of a brilliant fool, so I got him down here with malice aforethought, to introduce him to Miss Montgomery, and I no more expected, when he first came forward for Midhampton, that he would be elected, than that he would sit for the moon in a parliament of the solar system. But what our political strength would never have done for him then, the dishonesty of his antagonist effected, and I had the pleasure of congratulating him on becoming our member at the commencement of last year. Now, what does this ungrateful young rascal do in return for my getting him his own seat, but plague me to exert myself to obtain the other also for his brother-in-law. For I don't mind owning that we are to have two weddings amongst us this year, and that Miss Darcy that is, will most probably open the Hunt ball at Christmas, as the youngest bride present. This is a dreadfully jobbing affair, and I ought to be ashamed of my share in it, but I have this comfort, that it is a good deal more respectable than the transactions of the last election, so I hope you will not be very hard upon us now. Mr. Dwight has undertaken all the politics, so, having played my part, and proposed my candidate, I shall now withdraw,

and make way for somebody better worth listening to than I am."

The Colonel had not exaggerated the powers or willingness of his seconder to make up for any deficiencies of his own, for that pillar of Protestantism delivered an oration of at least an hour's duration, on which the politest criticism that I can record is, that it was the speech of a sincerely pious and conscientious man, though I hardly wonder at the universal relief that was expressed when it was all over. But if Charles Burton possessed one half of the shining qualities and virtues with which he was now invested by his champion, he must have been a phoenix indeed, and it was very generous of Phil to entertain no shadow of jealousy of such a bright, peculiar star.

No other candidate being proposed, our two friends were declared duly elected, and nothing remained to be done, but to thank their constituency for the honours they had done them. Darcy, who spoke first, adhered most strenuously to the good old rule of "leaving well alone," and contented himself with expressions of good-will towards the town he was a second time elected to represent, and assurances of attention to their local interests, interspersed with good-humoured allusions to his approaching residence amongst them at the Hall. But Charles, who was not yet seated in the easy chair of great personal influence and individual popularity, and, moreover, had the fear of Mr. Dwight before his eyes, was compelled to be more explicit in his views, and to grapple with the questions before him in a far more decided manner; but being a clever fellow, and having for some months given considerable attention to the topics on which he would have to speak, he acquitted himself so well when driven to show his mettle, that few of the better edu-

cated of his audience failed to observe in him the germs of a powerful debater.

"Well done, Charlie!" said Darcy, patting his friend on the shoulder with affectionate familiarity, as they drove home to the Priory, where a large dinner party was to assemble that evening; "you surpassed yourself. Who would have thought a year ago that you would distinguish yourself in the political world? Not I, I frankly confess, though it was not my wish to do injustice to your talents, but I never heard you open your lips on these subjects before, since even your agreement to stand as my colleague was couched in the polite assurance, that you would make a fool of yourself to any amount that I required, if I continued to press you with such earnestness. But you have certainly made a fine beginning."

"A man never knows what he can do till he tries," replied Charles, laughing, "and I dare say that the Irishman who was doubtful about his powers as a violinist, because he never had taken a bow in hand, eventually became another Paganini. What did you think of the proceedings, Count?" he continued, turning to Marcellus.


"Don't ask me, I implore you," answered the Hungarian, shuddering; "if all the chattering to which Mr. Dwight treated us is really necessary for the strength of your constitution, all I can say is, that the remedy is worse than the disease, and Britannia had far better die peaceably, than be talked into raving madness. I liked Phil's speech very much, and cheered him with all my might, because he spoke about the fun we were to have, and the dinners and balls, and so on, at the Hall, when he comes back from his wedding tour, which I call taking a practical, sensible view of things; but as for you and Mr. Dwight, I only wish you could hear my confessor,

about the middle of Lent, railing at the gluttony of the heretics, that's all."

"Mr. Dwight is coming to dinner to-day," said Charles, mischievously, "so you'll have it all over again this evening, I have little doubt."

"Stop the carriage!" roared Marcellus; "put me down directly! I have an engagement to dine with Captain Devereux, and it is not like a gentleman to forget my promise. Besides which, I am not bound, by my character as a soldier, to stand such a fearful ordeal as that."

And despite of all their assurances that they were only joking, the terrified Marcellus insisted upon going to the barracks to hunt up his military friend, with whom he *bonâ fide* spent the dreaded evening.



CHAPTER XXVI.

CUPID DELIVERS UP HIS CHARGE TO HYMEN, AND ATTACHES
HIMSELF TO THE LYNX.

THE happy day appointed for the union of our young lovers was ushered in by as lovely a morning as ever clad the earth with brightness to bless the solemn rites, which realised the tenderest hopes of the gentlest and most beneficent of her children. At the earliest dawn all the village was astir, and the quiet little hamlet of East Langley was transformed for the once into a busy manufacturing town; though its staple produce was not that of the far-famed cloth, or equally famous cutlery, whose crowded homes could be seen with a glass from the hills behind the Priory, but was wholly floral, and consisted in the weaving an immense quantity of garlands under the able tuition of Hermann Rodelein and the gallant Hans. Nor did the warlike head of the Aurantii disdain to lend his aid both by precept and example, but was actively employed in superintending the arrangement of the garlands, and the baskets of flowers to be strewn on the path leading to the church, and in marshalling the procession of children with as much care as his ancestral Hussars. And he never quitted his post, until warned by that uncompromising monitor, his watch, that his time was running short, he mounted his horse to gallop back to the Priory, to change his dress for the coming ceremony.

As he rode down the avenue at a foot's pace, having reined in his horse in consequence of a sudden fit of

musings having seized him for which he could hardly account, he fell in with Leila, who, despite of being in full uniform as a bridesmaid, had strolled up the garden in search of a crimson moss-rose bud, and was returning round by the carriage-sweep with her prize in her hand.

He greeted her in his usual friendly manner, but was surprised to see the traces of tears upon her cheeks; indeed, the dewdrops still glistened in her sparkling eyes. "What! weeping on such a festive day as this?" said he; "we ought to be all merriment and joy. I have made up my mind to think of nothing but happiness till bed-time at the very least, and am quite amazed to see you looking so melancholy. What has occurred to make you unhappy?"

"Is it nothing, then, Marcellus," replied Leila, mournfully, "that I am losing my very dearest and kindest friend? I shall welcome her back again, indeed, in a few weeks, as far as seeing her sweet gentle face again is concerned, but can we ever be once more to each other what we have been? Can she ever be to me the darling Floss, for whose sorrows I mourned with all my heart, for whose deliverance I rejoiced as though it had been my own, and to whom I in return could confide any little matter that troubled me, and who loved, and petted, and chided me as a sister? and can I ever again be poor, giddy, affectionate, spoiled Lola to her? It is a melancholy thing after all, this severing all the old ties of life, however hopefully we may look forward to new ones. And although it is only natural that she should look on to-day as only the commencement of a Paradise on earth, yet I may be pardoned, I hope, if I drop a tear in secret for the dear old days that can never return to me."

"And yet," returned Marcellus, "the self-same day will in all human probability come to you also before

very long, and you in your turn will go forth to a new existence with a melancholy, solemn rather than painful, at leaving the home of your childhood, to play your part in the battle-field of life." Leila shook her head, but made no reply, though the crimson flush which suffused her face, and her quick breathing, sufficiently betokened some suspicion that a critical moment in her own life had now arrived.

"I want to ask you a question, Leila," said Marcellus, dismounting from his horse, "for which I may never get a fairer opportunity than the present, inasmuch as I would far rather have your decision influenced by an undue prejudice against what I have to say, than run any risk of your speaking in the enthusiasm of the moment, in a way of which your cooler judgment would disapprove. If in a year's time from this, I were to reappear at your father's house to ask you to leave the kind home to which you have been accustomed, to share mine, thus tearing you from old ties and old associations, to plunge you among new interests and new responsibilities, calling you to elect once for all between me and everything else that you hold dear, and warning you that it is fruitless to halt between two opinions, and that you must either be mine wholly and unreservedly, or reject me altogether, how would your decision be given? Do not hasten to reply, if you think the matter requires consideration, but let me know to-morrow, if I may beg such a favour."

"I can answer immediately, Marcellus," answered Leila, firmly, "for I know the state of my own heart better perhaps than my self-respect would willingly allow. To three great duties I must remain true, even at the sacrifice of your love, viz., to my God, my father, and my country. Never will I pay even outward homage to the Church of Rome, or by the remotest implication renounce my unqualified allegi-

ance to the primitive and apostolic faith of my fathers. Moreover, in my house, and my presence, Colonel Mainwaring must hold the station which he has a right to expect his daughter to concede to him; and if any ridiculous insult be offered him by some one of the three millions of noblemen who are supposed to populate Central Europe, founded on a mistaken impression of that worthy's superiority of birth, I must be at perfect liberty to resent the absurdity as I choose. And lastly, I beg you thoroughly to understand that I shall ever remain perfectly English at heart, and can never pretend to sympathise in either disparagement or hostility towards my native country. But in all other respects, I can promise you as warm a return of your love as the heart of man could desire; I can and will struggle to have only one mind, one interest, and one object in life with you; I will devote myself to you with an affection that shall know no tiring through adversity as well as prosperity, and my proudest boast shall be to have merited your approbation. Do you know, Marcellus, I am afraid I have been a little bit in love with you ever since the days when a doll would have been a more appropriate object of admiration; but when I thought you dead, a year ago, then it was that I first realised to myself how desolate the world would be, if robbed of you." And nervous sobs checked the further utterance of poor Leila's confessions.

"Your three requests are granted most unhesitatingly, dearest," whispered Marcellus, tenderly pressing her to his heart; "and more than that, I heartily applaud your spirit, and feel convinced that you will be none the less faithful to me for being so unflinchingly true to the dictates of religion, of duty, and of gratitude. Now, dry those pretty eyes, and call back your

sunniest smiles to your lips, for we must not mar the festivities of the day with signs of woe."

As he thus spoke, he remounted his horse, and quickened his pace to a gallop, as he had already exposed himself to no little risk of being the slothful laggard, by whose delay the festive procession might be delayed. This disgrace, however, he happily avoided, and when the Colonel pronounced it time to start, he was ready in the hall to hand Julia and Leila to the carriage, while he himself accompanied Philip Darcy, in his capacity of bridegroom's man, to the little church of West Langley.

A striking scene, to one who knew the circumstances attending the history of the young pair, that marriage ceremony presented, and greatly indeed had the current of events changed, since the only occasion on which they had ever before knelt side by side before that solemn altar. Then, from the hands of the venerable Rector who now slept below that gray slab on the north side of the table, they had received the Communion in all the hopelessness of persons praying for aid to bear an awful doom with fitting resignation, while the cold unpitying eyes of Pauline glared balefully upon them from behind. Now, as good Mr. Danvers proceeds to unite them in the indissoluble bonds of wedlock, the friendly glance of Marcellus Aurantius falls upon them from beneath a neatly but simply carved monument, erected at the expense and under the personal superintendence of Florence herself, to the memory of her unhappy rival. And as the concluding words of the charge to the congregation, "Therefore if any man can show any just cause why they may not lawfully be joined together, let him now speak, or else hereafter for ever hold his peace," fell on the ears of Philip Darcy, his eyes mechanically turned to that melancholy tablet, as if he were almost

apprehensive that the very spirit of the deceased Pauline might appear, to cast a gloom over his newly-recovered happiness. And even Florence, as she quitted the altar the wedded wife of her beloved Philip, and looked forward to futurity as one long vista of happiness, could not refrain from casting a timid glance in the same direction, and her face exchanged its bright smile for a look of subdued melancholy, as she passed by the spot, described by the marble record as containing the remains of poor, erring, misguided Pauline Wohlgemuth. But the bells are ringing forth their merriest peal, and the bridal procession moves onward towards the gate over the flower-strewn pathway, amid the tumultuous welcome of the village throng, so we also must drop our sad reflections, and hasten to the closing festivities of this memorable morning.

Upon the speeches at the wedding-breakfast I shall not linger, for they were all of the usual kind, and only varied from the general run in the fortunate peculiarity of having such able speakers to undertake their respective duties as the two Borough members, Marcellus, and Mr. Montgomery. The office of proposing the health of the young couple devolved upon the gallant Count of —, who acquitted himself to admiration, while Charles returned thanks, as a mere matter of course, for the bridesmaids, to whose honour a glass of champagne was dedicated by Captain Devereux; the occasions which called the Squire and Darcy to their legs can need no explanation to any one in his sound senses. Not that I must forget the good old Colonel, who, adjured by his daughter to speak out for the honour of the Priory, proposed the health "of the man who did the mischief," in the shape of worthy Mr. Danvers, with his usual frank good humour.

But when, the breakfast being concluded, the wedding-gifts were being brought to the gentle bride, who was seated in state upon the sofa in the famous blue drawing-room, an address was presented by Hermann Rodelein, which deserves a little more attention, as accompanying a tribute of respect, which, in point of interest, was decidedly the leading object of attraction amongst the many offerings which lay around it, and which consisted of a beautifully carved and handsomely fitted dressing-case, made of oak, and lined with crimson silk. The original was couched in a language but very imperfectly understood by any persons there present, except Rodelein himself and Marcellus Aurantius, though Darcy, Leila, and the illustrious Hans, who lingered in the room under pretence of waiting for his master's orders, understood enough of the Magyar language to catch the general drift of the speaker's meaning, as he slowly read the contents of the parchment which was attached by a crimson and white ribbon to the gift itself. But this deficiency was ably remedied by the good Count of —, who acted as an interpreter with considerable fluency, considering that he was translating into a foreign language from a tongue singularly unfavourable to such an undertaking, under the most auspicious circumstances, and it is to his rendering that I must direct my readers for the purport of the address. It ran as follows, as nearly as the difference of idioms will admit of translation :—

“ To the lovely and high-born lady, Florence Montgomery, from the grateful inhabitants of Southern Hungary and the Banat of Temesvar, for whose preservation from fearful evils she cheerfully imperilled her own happiness. May Heaven richly reward her for all her generous self-devotion !

“ We hereby offer thee, noble maiden, our sincere

congratulations on thy approaching union with the object of thy love, who himself is as a brother to us, adopted in the hour of peril, and honourably remembered amongst us still ; and we desire to pay our little tribute also to thy goodness, trifling in value, but rich in the love we bear thee. In the case we now present there is no one single thing which is not of native production, or connected with purely native associations. We are poor, and unable to send thee as splendid a testimonial as we could wish, but thou wilt graciously look on the feelings which impel us, and pardon the poorness of the gift. The oak of which our offering is made was cut from a tree, from whose branches the crimson banner of the cross long floated in proud defiance of the unbeliever, in the court yard of the frontier bulwark of Christendom. The silver of the mountings is native metal, wrought by native artists ; the stones therein set were dug from our own hills ; the steel has been supplied by the swords that once curbed the Ottoman, and saved civilization in days of yore ; and even the silk which lines it has been grown in our own land, has been a labour of love to us to cultivate for upwards of a year (our children striving to outvie each other in the care bestowed on the insects that worked for the holy cause), has been woven by our countrymen in England for this express purpose, and has been applied to its present object by Hungarian workmen. Take it, then, all native as it is, and when you deign to use it think of the grateful hearts that pray for thee daily. We have addressed thee in our own Magyar, for your language is not familiar to all who wish themselves to read the expression of our gratitude, which we hereby forward to thee, and we love not to use the tongue of the enslaver. May Heaven keep you from all evil !”

Florence replied in French, as being the only language at her command, which united the recommendation of being understood by the bearer of the present with the avoiding the use of the obnoxious German, and begged that her warmest thanks and assurances of good-will might be given to her kind friends, who indeed had been foremost in the interchange of friendship and hospitality, since they in danger and distress had won her eternal gratitude, long before she had any opportunity of returning the obligation. Nor had she even done more than any other woman would have done, in shrinking from bringing such misery upon her fellow-creatures upon purely personal grounds.

The presentation of the other gifts then proceeded, amongst which a magnificent suit of black fox fur from Marcellus, and a very dingy but fabulously expensive Indian shawl from the Colonel, were the most conspicuous for value; though the very last offering of all was the one which was dearest to the heart of the bride, humble although it was in its nature, and lowly though the donors who now placed it in her hands. This was a large Prayer Book, from the Sunday school children over whom she had presided for four years, and amongst whom she had laboured to the best of her young ability, ever since she was almost an infant herself. There was no pretence of show about it—no gorgeous binding, no gold-mounted markers—it was simply and stoutly bound in purple calf, with red edges, and its principal value was typical of the worth of which it was a respectful testimonial, viz., that it was genuinely good and useful of its kind, and was meant to be applied to the honest, straightforward work of furthering true religion.

“May the Almighty give you health, my child,”

said the excellent Mr. Danvers, with emotion, "to follow the services of the Church in that book, long after I am gathered to my fathers! May you use it when your eyes are dimming with age, and your heart gladly falls back for comfort on the solemn stores laid up in a wisely spent youth; and may you fill your appointed place in the new duties you have taken upon yourself as faithfully as you have ever borne you in the old."

The afternoon wore on in the affectionate leave-takings, with which the universally beloved Florence was positively deluged—dozens of her old neighbours sending in piteous messages to be allowed to shake her by the hand before she went, to none of whom was an ungracious answer returned—so the time for leaving her father's roof at length arrived; the carriage was at the door, the children, with fresh baskets of flowers, again lined the avenue, and the bride, in her travelling dress, appeared in the hall, escorted by Leila and Menie as bridesmaids-in-waiting. A few natural tears upon her father's breast, an affectionate embrace to her two pets, a hearty farewell to all, as she passes through a double row of zealous friends, and Florence Darcy is handed by her husband into the carriage, which whirls rapidly away.

Leila and Marcellus stroll down towards the gate, as though to take a last look, but they return not for a considerable time, pacing thoughtfully backwards and forwards under the sheltering elms. Talking sweetly of love and future happiness, no doubt? Nay, gentle reader! their conversation just now is very different to this. Marcellus is lecturing upon the most abstruse points of continental politics, with a grave and even disturbed air; and Leila listens with a face better befitting the wife of a Christian martyr, called upon to renounce the Faith, or seal his testi-

mony with his blood, than a loving maiden, hardly past the years of absolute childhood, drinking in the words of him from whose lips she had this very day heard the fate-bearing confession of attachment.

"This fearful struggle must one day come," said he, "and many a man must be swept away in it. Who or what any of us may be ere ten years be passed, is hid in impenetrable darkness; but in this strife of warring elements, Marcellus Aurantius must bear himself as a worthy descendant of the mighty dead!"

And Leila clings to him with both hands as she looks fondly in his face, and murmurs "At least, we can die honourably, Marcellus! and men shall say, that of a long line of heroes, the last Lord of ——— was not the least worthy of respect and admiration."

The curtain has fallen upon the Drama of Life, in which our young friends have played their appointed part; but some curiosity perhaps may still remain as to the ultimate destiny of one or two of the actors in the foregoing scenes.

Imagine, then, dear reader, a lapse of three years, and transport yourself in fancy to the Free City of Frankfort-upon-Main, where two families, well known in the preceding pages, have just encountered one another in the Goethe Platz, immediately after the conclusion of the English Morning Service.

The first party have only just arrived from London, and both in dress and manner unmistakeably betray the land of their birth; the other consists of an officer in the uniform of a Hungarian regiment, covered with decorations, and the very beau ideal of an Imperial soldier, having on his arm a slightly-built, but extremely pretty little wife, in whom, despite of her

raven hair and southern caste of features, something which reminds one of home and open fire-places is plainly traceable.

"Ah, Julia," said the latter lady, seizing her friend by both hands with her usual enthusiasm, "how delighted I am to see you. How go all our friends in England, and how was dear old Phil, and kind, gentle Floss, when last you saw them?"

"Excellently well, and as merry as ever," replied Charles Burton, speaking for his wife; "Phil is just the same good fellow that he always was, and grows more and more useful every day. He has nearly cut the House indeed, and rarely takes his seat except upon grand field-days, or when local business connected with his county is being brought forward; indeed he is constantly declaring that he will never sit in Parliament again, which I trust is only an empty threat; but at home he is the most stirring and energetic man in the neighbourhood, and has got his estates into the finest order possible, both as regards his own interests and the welfare of the people connected him. Florence, too, seems as young and as lively as when she was little more than a child, and shares all her husband's pleasures, as well as his cares, as a wife should. They are servile imitators of Darby and Joan in their domestic arrangements, but it is in a house continually crowded with friends, and amidst the most lavish hospitality, so they have not grown humdrum folks by any means."

"I must tell you a little bit of gossip which Charles has omitted," interrupted Julia, laughing, "which is that Walter Tomnoddy, who has now taken his mother's name of Everton, seems desperately smitten with Menie, and although we must not begin matchmaking with such mere chits, it really looks rather
ious."

"I am glad to hear it," said Marcellus, "for he is a fine young fellow, and it grieved me to the heart to be obliged to give him up to his uncle, after having hoped to bring him out in the Imperial Service. However, I could say nothing against it, when the old General sent him to Sandhurst, to prepare for entering the English army instead, and I hear that he has been doing well."

"What nonsense you do delight in retailing about Menie," quoth Charles, merrily; "children will have their favourites like other people, but there the matter ends. Have you heard, Count, of the death of poor Captain Devereux? it shocked us very much, for his affairs were rapidly amending, and he might reasonably have looked forward to a long life of prosperity. But it was not so ordained, and his name is found in the fearful bead-roll of the victims to the infatuated blindness of English diplomacy. He fell in the wild charge at Balaklava, mortally wounded by a grape-shot, and sent his sabre as a dying gift to Mr. Montgomery, the mournful meaning of which legacy it was not difficult to fathom. Poor fellow! he was a gallant officer and a polished gentleman—but of such our country has to mourn the loss of hundreds. When shall we learn the wisdom of averting war, by the only effectual means, the being perfectly prepared for it?"

"Ah! when indeed!" answered Marcellus. "The sermon of an old acquaintance of yours this morning reminded of me that very forcibly—not that a word of it was worth hearing, except the text. But when he gave out as his subject the awful denunciation of the prophet—'And shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?'—I own that I did think of English statesmen shuffling and trimming, and English soldiers dying of cholera and exposure, and thought it the

most fearfully appropriate passage for the serious meditation of your countrymen I had ever heard."

"Who was the orator?" asked Julia; "for we have not arrived here more than an hour."

"Why, no less a person than Mr. McKenzie," replied Leila, "who took the duty to-day for the Chaplain, who is the nicest and most gentlemanlike man possible, by the by, but is unluckily for us not very well. So our old abomination filled his place for this once, and treated us to a most alarming description of our national vices, although, as Marcellus very justly remarks, he forgot to mention those sins of bad faith and weakness, for which the rulers, and not the people, of England alone are answerable. But how goes it with yourselves? for your letters are never half long enough, or half personal enough for me."

"Charles is rising very rapidly in his profession," returned Julia, "and stands well, I hope, in the House, although his political opinions are not in very great favour at present. I cannot well enter into his domestic vices and savage cruelties before his face, so I must content myself with saying that nobody can absolutely convict me of falsehood, if I pretend to be happy and prosperous. But we can chat over this to-morrow."

"Come and dine with us this evening," said Leila, "we won't poison you more than we can help, and I have a French cook, who never was in these regions until I imported him last month. We are living at No. —, Neur Mainzer Strasse—everybody in the city can tell you where that is. We are in command of the Imperial Contingent at present, but I wish we were safe home again, for I detest the Germans, and all their shabby ways, most cordially."

"Fie, Leila!" exclaimed Julia, "you are half a nun yourself now."

"The Saints forbid!" rejoined the little Countess; "I might as well charge you with being a New Zealander or a Canadian Indian. But we shan't remain here very long, I understand, and then hey for the woodland scenes and merry hunting-parties of the dear Old Land. *Au revoir!*" So with many promises of future meetings, the friends parted—the Burtons to their inn, and Leila and her spouse to drive in the beautiful environs of the city.

One more character deserves our further notice, and I must now request the reader to take a still longer flight of fancy with me than before, and to accompany me to one of the vast plains which separate the gold-fields of California from the more cultivated parts of the vast North American republic. A haggard, toil-worn fugitive, but three days escaped from the consequences of his dishonesty amongst his fellow-labourers at the diggings, is resting beneath a tree, and vainly endeavouring to kindle a fire to cook a half-fledged bird which he has succeeded in capturing. His clothes hang upon him in rags, and his whole aspect betokens such extremity of distress, that one almost fancies that life cannot be worth purchasing at the penalty of such terrible privation. Yet he gazes around him with as much anxiety as though he were counting immense treasures in some unprotected spot, and at every rustling of the leaves starts with undisguised apprehension. At last he gives up his unaccustomed task in despair, rends his uncooked meal with his teeth like some savage wild beast, and composes himself to rest with such resignation as he can muster. He sleeps in a few minutes, worn out with hunger and fatigue, and memory wafts him back to the scenes of former days, to the War of Independence, to England, to Pauline, and his previous escape from captivity. A rude hand awakens him, and starting

up, he sees himself, to his horror, surrounded by a band of Indians, whose angry voices and threatening gestures sufficiently denote their implacable hostility. A cruel and fiendish outrage had been committed upon their tribe a few months ago, and hopeless indeed is the condition of the white man who now falls into their hands. Their deliberations he can only watch with agonized eyes, but their conversation he cannot understand, frantically as he strains his attention to catch a single word which may serve as a clue for the rest. After a long debate, they bend a tall sapling to the ground and fasten it down into the earth, in some manner, the principle of which he cannot comprehend; but horrible visions of being torn limb from limb by the rebound crowd upon his mind, which are heightened to a desperate certainty, as they bind his hands behind his back, and attach him by a deer-skin rope to the trap or catch, by which the sapling is retained in its place. But this does not appear to be their plan of action, for after tying another long rope round his neck, which they once more append to the tree, they leave him in solitude, with diabolical yells of merriment, and disappear in the distance to an adjoining eminence, from whence he can see the fires of their encampment begin to blaze through the growing darkness.

For awhile he experiences a sensation of relief, almost amounting to happiness, but soon a crushing sense of his impotence to release himself creeps over his mind, and he begins to realize the awful fact that he is only spared a painful death in one shape, to meet it in another and even more appalling form, through famine in the wilderness.

Again he attempts to sleep, again slumber visits his eyelids, and again the scenes of olden days glide before his mental vision in disordered array. He dreams of

the murder of his wife, and that Leila is clinging to him, as on the fatal heath at Cadstone ; but suddenly her form changes to that of Marcellus Aurantius, who with his heavy cavalry sabre unsheathed seizes him by the hair and prepares to strike. He leaps up in terror ; the exertion tears from the earth the detaining peg, and the tree released rebounds to its natural position, carrying the wretched Dolchein with it, suspended by the neck. His weight again bows it to the ground till he regains his feet, but the noose has tightened till it cuts into the flesh, and the work of death is irrevocably commenced. A few convulsive struggles, a flashing as of a thousand lights before the eyes, a roaring as of the mighty ocean in the ears, and all is over. Karl Dolchein has gone to his place, and the cruel murder is avenged !

Reader, my task is done ! and as I lack words of sufficient force to point my moral, as I fain would do, through my own eloquence, I will make bold to steal a sentiment from an author too celebrated to mind a little pillage—

“More skins of foxes than of asses, find their way to the tanners.”

THE END.

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